GEOPOLITICAL TRENDS SHAPING THE CURRENT GLOBAL ORDER

Synopsis:

GEOPOLITICAL TRENDS SHAPING THE CURRENT GLOBAL ORDER

1. INTRODUCTION

The geopolitical landscape is currently undergoing significant transformations, *marked by the decline of U.S. hegemony and the rise of multipolarity. The emergence of China, Russia's resurgence, Europe's pursuit of autonomy, and India's strategic positioning contribute to this shift.* Russia actively challenges U.S. domination, forming alliances with China and Iran. Europe, faced with geopolitical challenges, strengthens economic ties with China. Meanwhile, the U.S. witnesses a fading influence in the Middle East. The dwindling impact of Western-led global institutions emphasizes the need for a multipolar system. The expansion of BRICS and the Israel-Hamas conflict

further shape the new world order. For Pakistan, navigating this dynamic landscape involves strategic choices, economic collaboration, and addressing regional stability and security challenges. The U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy, climate governance, and Afghanistan's stability also influence Pakistan's foreign policy decisions. A nuanced approach is required to balance alliances, respond to global power shifts, and safeguard national interests in this evolving international landscape.

2. THE DECLINE OF U.S. HEGEMONY AND THE RISE OF MULTIPOLARITY

The 21st century has witnessed a notable recalibration of global power dynamics, as the once unchallenged U.S. hegemony experiences a discernible decline, giving way to a burgeoning era of multipolarity. Militarily, America still reigns supreme, but its economic grip loosens, and its soft power falters amidst domestic polarization. This transition isn't a dramatic collapse, but gradual erosion, paving the way for a world with no single power at the helm. Economic expansions and technological advancements in countries like China and India have propelled them onto the world stage as formidable players, diluting the traditional dominance of the United States. Geopolitically, alliances are shifting, and regional powers are asserting the ir influence, contributing to a more intricate and balanced international order. The U.S.'s military interventions and geopolitical overreach in the early 2000s have strained its global standing, while rising powers increasingly assert their own interests. As multipolarity takes root, diplomatic negotiations, cooperation, and multilateralism become paramount, heralding a new era where the global stage is shared among diverse actors, each vying for influence and shaping the trajectory of international relations.

Americans tend to say U.S. influence around the world is diminishing and China's is getting stronger

% of U.S. adults who say each country's influence in the world has been ____ in recent years

	Getting stronger	Staying about the same	Getting weaker
U.S.	19%	32%	47%
China	66	22	10
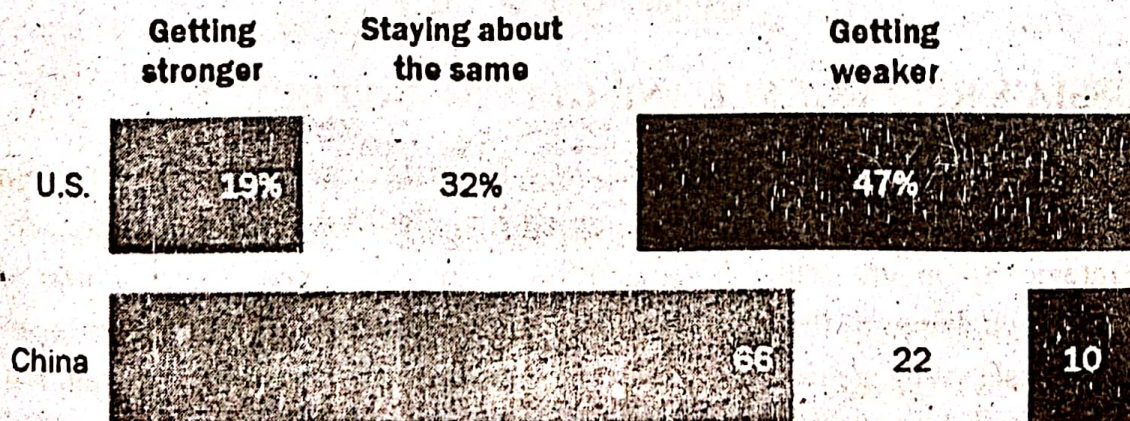
"Recently, emerging global powers have challenged the existing international order, whereas the US is on a declining trajectory. The US hegemonic obligations to use its preponderant power in global issues with the intent to cast events in its favour have brought an inevitable overstretch beyond its capacity. Furthermore, a visible shift in power centres, the backlash of political decisions, and economic recession are other factors."

(Muhammad Abbas and Hassan Jalil Shah - Margalla Papers-2021 (Issue-I) [p. 131-142])

3. INDIA'S STRATEGIC POSITIONING IN THE EMERGING ORDER

With the world's largest population and aspirations to great power status, India may be the most important of the world's emerging powers.

(Carnegieendowment.org)

India's strategic positioning in the emerging global order is multifaceted and dynamic. Recognized as a regional stabilizer, India assumes the role of a 'net security provider' in the U.S. Indo-Pacific vision, strategically engaging with both global and regional powers. Employing a delicate balancing act rather than hedging, India maintains a selective and deep engagement in various forums and alliances such as G-20, BRICS, QUAD, and AUKUS. Through its **'Look East Policy,'** India seamlessly integrates into the East Asian region, fostering closer ties, while its 'Look West Policy' bolsters diplomatic relations with the Middle East. Furthermore, India's elevated standing in global economic institutions like the IMF and FATF, despite not being an NPT member, underscores its adeptness in securing waivers and accessing global technological markets. This nuanced approach positions India as a key player, navigating the complexities of the evolving international landscape with strategic acumen.

"U.S. Emerges as India's Biggest Trading Partner in FY23 at US$128.55 Billion; China at Second Position,"

(Hindu, April 16, 2023)

4. RUSSIA'S RESURGENCE AND GLOBAL INFLUENCE

Russia's resurgence on the global stage is characterized by a distinct vision that actively opposes U.S. domination in key regions like the Middle East, Europe, and Asia. In a strategic alignment with China and Iran, Russia aims to foster a new era of multipolarity, challenging the existing global order. The Ukraine war serves as a focal point for Russia's engagement with the U.S., becoming a battleground that not only challenges American hegemony but also carries potential global consequences. While the Western response to Russia's actions unites democracies, it also poses risks to the stability of the Western financial system. Despite facing criticism and growing ..

West, Russia finds increasing favor in the East, particularly through collaborative efforts with China and Iran. This shift in alliances prompts Russia to explore alternative economic mechanisms, exemplified by its involvement in BRICS-led parallel infrastructure projects, signaling a diversification of global economic power structures.

"Russia is a resurgent power that shares a vision of a new world order away from the domination of a single power. Russia has actively instrumentalised its political influence to counter the U.S. domination in the Middle East, Europe and Asia."

(Rizwana Abbasi - Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad - 09-Aug-2023)

Russia's global influence

Europe

Europe's relationship with its neighbor Russia is complex, characterized by close energy ties but tense political relations

Asia

Russia has fostered closer ties with India and China. Economic rivals but cooperative in terms of trade, defense and energy.

Africa

President Putin said in 2019 that fostering closer ties with Africa was one of Russia's foreign policy priorities

Latin America

Russia has strong ties with Venezuela, Nicaragua and Cuba, as well as Brazil and Argentina

Middle East

Russia has cleverly managed its relationships in the Middle East, being allies with both Iran and Saudi Arabia

5. EUROPE'S QUEST FOR STRATEGIC AUTONOMY

The outbreak of war in Ukraine has instigated a significant shift in European priorities, compelling nations to reassess their economic strategies, diversify value chains, and actively pursue strategic autonomy. Faced with ongoing Russian geopolitical challenges, Europe turns its attention towards Asia, notably China, in a quest for economic stability. The economic ties between Europe and China have strengthened considerably, with the trade volume reaching nearly **850 billion Euros in 2022**, reflecting a pragmatic response to ensure resilience amid geopolitical uncertainties. Moreover, the imperative to address climate change has led European leaders to recognize the importance of engaging in dialogue with China. This dialogue is seen as crucial not only for managing economic relationships but also as a means to make substantial progress in mitigating CO_2 emissions, highlighting the intricate interplay between geopolitical considerations, economic strategies, and global environmental challenges in Europe's pursuit of strategic autonomy.

"The shift away from a US-led international order towards a multipolar world was set in motion long before President Trump took office. In reality, for some years now, the rise of China and the return of Russia to the world stage have had an enormous impact on world politics. It's not just the "America first" policy that Europe must find ways to deal with. We are also witnessing a chain of action and reaction, with Russia, China, India, Turkey, Brazil and many other countries putting their country first. So, my key message today is this: the EU needs a reality check; power is not a dirty word."

(Responding to the global disorder by Joan Miró – Journal : Global Society Volume 37, 2023 - Issue 3)

6. U.S. FADING INFLUENCE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The U.S. finds its influence in the Middle East waning, a consequence of its pursuit of liberal hegemonic designs characterized by regime change strategies, resulting in self-inflicted damage and diminishing impact. China's assertive diplomacy, coupled with collaborative efforts with Russia and Iran, emerges as a potent challenge to U.S. dominance in the region. The dynamics in the Middle East are shifting, with the prediction that the region's destiny will be increasingly shaped by soft balancing rather than traditional hard power. As China and Russia expand their influence, the U.S. faces a paradigm where its historical role is being reassessed, prompting a reevaluation of its approach to the complex geopolitics of the Middle East. The current deal between Saudi Arabia brokered by China is a manifestation of the expanding influence of China in the region.

"This reflects a larger tectonic shift in the international order where, as mentioned above, American unipolarity is on the wane and a new multipolar order, led by Russia and China, and supported by the BRICS states [Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa], is being born...... There are three major takeaways from the Saudi-Iranian thaw: firstly, that the decline of American power in the Middle East is well underway; secondly, that Chinese diplomacy is growing and making its presence felt in unexpected places; and thirdly, that there are opportunities in the détente between Riyadh and Tehran that Pakistan can benefit from, should it play its cards right and put its own chaotic house in order."

(Qasim A. Moini | Dawn April 22, 2023)

It shows that the US and, to a lesser degree, Europe have lost their status as regional power brokers. Peter Baker wrote in The New York Times that the Chinese-brokered deal had "upended US diplomacy in the Middle East"(

7. THE RISE OF CHINA AS A COMPETING HEGEMON:

In the endemic world, the emergence of China as a potential superpower is surfacing. It has been a long evolutionary process from the coarse period to the age of prosperity that pushes China to an upward trajectory with its reform model for domestic and worldwide growth. Its economic and strategic directions are reaping fruits in the Belt and Road Initiative. Beijing's goodwill has been endorsed by different countries of the world who wish to learn from the ascendancy of China on the world stage. However, with the rise of China, it is feared that it would have implications for the predominant world order. With the country's political, economic, military, and social reforms and its distinctive Soft Power approach, China is becoming an influential power that cannot be ignored on the global horizon.

Nascet power ?

8. THE DWINDLING INFLUENCE OF WESTERN-LED GLOBAL INSTITUTIONS:

The influence of Western-led global institutions, including the United Nations, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund, is perceived globally as dwindling, with a consensus emerging on the need for a new multipolar system that ensures a more equitable distribution of power among states. This shift towards multipolarity underscores the importance of fostering inclusive and effective international partnerships, necessitating innovative approaches to diplomacy, governance, and economic cooperation in the 21st century. In this evolving landscape, the concept of multipolarity challenges the notion that size dictates influence, as middle powers now wield more substantial impact. The conflict in Ukraine and the war between Israel and Hamas amplify these shifts, eroding the existing global .

> *"People are looking to their leaders for a way out of this mess. Yet in the face of all this and more, geopolitical divisions are undermining our capacity to respond. A multipolar world is emerging. While multipolarity can be a factor of equilibrium, it can also lead to escalating tensions, fragmentation and worse. But at a time when our challenges are more connected than ever, the outcome of a zero-sum game is that everyone gets zero,"* —
>
> **(UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres)**

9. EXPANSION OF BRICS: A HUGE SETBACK TO THE WORLD ORDER DOMINATED BY THE US

The recent expansion of BRICS, encompassing six new members—Saudi Arabia, Iran, the UAE, Argentina, Egypt, and Ethiopia—marks a transformative shift in the global economic and geopolitical landscape.

This extension symbolizes the emergence of a new world economic order challenging the long-standing dominance of the United States and its allies. With over half of the world's population and 43% of global oil production, the expanded BRICS bloc commands substantial demographic and economic power, surpassing the total GDP of the G7 countries even before this enlargement. This shift in demographics and resources signifies a formidable challenge to the US-dominated world order and mirrors the decline of the US empire across various spheres, including its economic footprint, the role of the US dollar, and its significance in global trade and investment. The inclusion of major oil-producing nations in the Middle East, like Saudi Arabia and Iran, holds strategic importance within BRICS. Originally conceived to contest US dominance, BRICS' expansion has sparked interest from other nations seeking to join this evolving alliance.

10. THE IMPACTS OF THE ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR ON THE NEW WORLD ORDER AND GLOBAL POLITICAL DYNAMICS:

The events of October 7 and the ensuing Israel-Hamas conflict extend beyond the historical Israeli-Palestinian struggle, revealing a deeply anti-political intent that challenges the foundations of diplomacy and agreements between opponents. The genocidal nature of the attacks, reminiscent of historical atrocities, has sparked global shock, not only due to the brutality unleashed but also from fears of a wider regional war. The uncertainty about whether diplomacy and deterrence can prevent further escalation underscores a broader issue: the collapse of the West's Middle East policy, affecting the United States, the European Union, and Germany. Israel's approach of ignoring Palestinians and attempting to manage the conflict through deterrence, settlements, and regional alliances is deemed a perilous illusion. This conflict, akin to Russia's actions in Ukraine, is indicative of an undefined global geopolitical shift often referred to as a "multipolar world," challenging Western dominance and the role of the American "world policeman." This evolving order encourages various powers to assert their interests, potentially leading to a more equitable global distribution of power—a prospect welcomed by many countries in the Global South.

"The World Won't Be the Same After the Israel-Hamas War The Middle East's latest war will have widespread geopolitical effects."

(Stephen M. Walt - foreign policy - NOVEMBER 8, 2023)

Like Russia's attack on Ukraine, the escalation in the Middle East is part of a global geopolitical transformation for which there is not yet a term. It certainly reveals the Western failure in the region.

(Jörg Lau - https://ip-quarterly.com/en/israel-hamas-war-and-new-world-order)

"The war between Israel and Hamas isn't just risking a regional conflagration. It is also affecting the global balance of power, stretching American and European resources while relieving pressure on Russia and providing new opportunities to China."

(Yaroslav Trofimov - The Wall Street Journal -Oct. 16, 2023)

11.CONCLUSION:

The current geopolitical landscape is marked by a profound transformation, characterized by the decline of U.S. hegemony and the rise of multipolarity. The recalibration of global power dynamics is evident in the assertive roles played by emerging powers like China, India, and Russia. Europe's quest for strategic autonomy, the dwindling influence of Western-led institutions, and the expansion of BRICS further contribute to this evolving international order. The Israel-Hamas conflict serves as a poignant example of the shifting dynamics, highlighting the challenges to the existing world order. As geopolitical trends continue to shape the global arena, nations, including Pakistan, must navigate this complex terrain with strategic foresight, fostering alliances, addressing regional challenges, and adapting to the nuanced realities of a multipolar world. The need for diplomatic agility, cooperation, and a commitment to inclusive global governance becomes paramount for fostering stability and prosperity in this dynamic era.

THE BEST BOOKS FOR UNDERSTANDING THE GEOPOLITICAL TRENDS SHAPING THE CURRENT GLOBAL ORDER

1. World Order by Henry Kissinger

In Henry Kissinger's book "World Order," the former US secretary of state explores the geopolitical landscape over the past 2000 years and speculates on its future trajectory. Delving into the concept of "order," Kissinger examines four major systems, including the European, Islamic, Chinese, and American orders. Contrary to the clash of civilizations theory, Kissinger emphasizes the need for engagement with diverse cultures rather than asserting an inevitable clash. The book covers various historical examples and addresses present-day issues, with a focus on China's central role in the international order. Kissinger critiques nation-building projects, such as George W. Bush's efforts in Iraq, and reflects on his own role in opening relations with China. The book resonates with liberal perspectives, acknowledging the limitations of imposing a monochrome Western image on the international order. It serves as a reminder of Kissinger's era, shaping a stable world order for a quarter-century, and warns future policymakers of the ongoing challenges in managing global affairs.

2. Principles for Dealing with the Changing World Order by Ray Dalio

From legendary investor Ray Dalio, author of the international bestseller *Principles*, who has spent half a century studying global economics and markets, *Principles for Dealing with the Changing World Order* examines history's most turbulent economic and political periods to reveal why the times ahead will likely be

radically different from those we've experienced in our lifetimes - but **similar** to those that have happened many times before. A few years ago, Ray Dalio noticed a confluence of political and economic conditions he hadn't encountered before. They included huge debts and zero or near-zero interest rates that led to massive printing of money in the world's three major reserve currencies; big political and social **conflicts** within countries, especially the US, due to the largest wealth, political and **values** disparities in more than 100 years; and the rising of a world power (China) to **challenge** the existing world power (US) and the existing world order. The last time that this confluence occurred was between 1930 and 1945. This realisation sent Dalio on a search for the repeating patterns and cause/effect relationships underlying all major **changes** in wealth and power over the last 500 years. In this remarkable and timely addition to his Principles series, Dalio brings readers along for his study of the major **empires** including the Dutch, the British and the American - putting into perspective the 'Big Cycle' that has driven the successes and failures of all the world's major **countries** throughout history. **Dalio reveals the timeless and universal forces behind these shifts and uses them to look into the future, offering practical principles for positioning oneself for what's ahead.**

3. The Future is Asian by Parag Khanna

"The Future is Asian" explores the rising influence and power of Asia in the global landscape. Parag Khanna delves into the economic, political, and cultural shifts taking place across the continent, highlighting the region's potential to shape the world's future. With a focus on the interconnectedness of Asian nations and their impact on global affairs, this book offers a compelling analysis of the Asian century and its implications for the rest of the world.

4. Great Powers and World Order: Patterns and Prospects by Charles W. Kegley

Great Powers and World Order encourages critical thinking about the nature of world order by presenting the historical information and theoretical concepts needed to make projections about the global future. Charles W. Kegley and Gregory Raymond ask students to compare retrospective cases and formulate their own hypotheses about not only the causes of war, but also the consequences of peace settlements. Historical case studies open a window to see what strategies for constructing world order were tried before, why one course of action was chosen over another, and how things turned out. By moving back and forth in each case study between history and theory, rather than treating them as separate topics, the authors hope to situate the assumptions, causal claims, and policy prescriptions of different schools of thought within the temporal domains in which they took root, giving the reader a better sense of why policy makers embraced a particular view of world order instead of an alternative vision.

UNVEILING INDIA'S GLOBAL ODYSSEY: AN ASPIRING SUPERPOWER ON THE GLOBAL STAGE

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9. Conclusion

UNVEILING INDIA'S GLOBAL ODYSSEY: AN ASPIRING SUPERPOWER ON THE GLOBAL STAGE

1. INTRODUCTION:

In recent years, India has undergone a transformative journey in its foreign policy approach, guided by the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. A subtle departure from the historical non-alignment stance is evident, replaced by a more intricate and multi-aligned strategy. This shift is manifest in India's engagements with major global players, including the United States, Russia, Israel, China, and nations across the Middle East and Asia. Iinda's economic collaborations, regional involvements, and active participation in international forums unravel the diplomatic intricacies and strategic initiatives that have positioned India as a significant player on the world stage. Noteworthy is India's adept response to global crises, exemplified during the COVID-19 pandemic, and its pivotal role in forums like the G20. Additionally, demographic dynamics, economic advancements, and strides in space technology, collectively portray India's multifaceted ascent as a prominent global actor.

2. TRANSFORMATION OF INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY: FROM NON-ALIGNMENT TO MULTI-ALIGNMENT

Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister had a hands-on approach on foreign policy which left a deep impact on its relations with the rest of the world for decades. The world after emerging from World War II saw the rise of two distinct blocs – US led Western Bloc (referred as the Capitalist Bloc) which led to the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and USSR led Eastern Bloc (referred as the Communist Bloc) which emerged from the Warsaw Pact Treaty, and the advent of the Cold War between them.

Nehru, greatly influenced by socialism, wanted India to have an identity independent of either bloc. Post WWII, the world witnessed a wave of decolonization and emergence of independent countries. Leaders of many of these nations shared ideas of not aligning with any of the blocs and instead sought to pursue a socialist path between capitalism and communism. This led to the birth of the Non-Alignment Movement (NAM).

At the Asian-African Conference in Bandung, Indonesia, in 1955, developing countries decided to abstain from allying with either of the two blocs and instead join together in support of self-determination against all forms of colonialism and imperialism. NAM held its first conference in Belgrade in 1961 under the leadership of Josip Broz Tito of Yugoslavia, Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt, Jawaharlal Nehru of India, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana and Sukarno of Indonesia.

The fall of USSR and end of the Cold War towards the end of the 20th century posed challenges to the relevance, identity and purpose of NAM. Many NAM member states are still rooted in the ideas of socialism and state control, which are deemed to be outdated in present times. Although NAM has 120 nations as members, today it competes for relevance with groups such as G20, ASEAN and BRICS.

Successive Indian governments under the Congress Party and other parties continued to take an active role in NAM's activities. In 1983 Indira Gandhi hosted the NAM Summit in New Delhi. However, under the NDA governments led by Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Narender Modi, India's participation in NAM has been comparatively subdued.

After the disintegration of USSR, the world passed through a unipolar phase with the US being the sole super power. But this was short lived and China, combined with its economic and military might, started positioning itself as a challenger to America's global leadership. The world was starting to witness a bipolar phase again.

In 2014 Narender Modi came to power emphasizing a strong foreign policy keeping India's national interests at the core in the emerging global order. He acknowledged the fact that he is the first Prime Minister of India to be born after independence and it would be natural to expect a shift in his world view compared to his predecessors. He has not attended any NAM Summit since becoming Prime Minister.

External Affairs Minister of India Dr.S.Jaishankar in his book "The India Way: Strategies for An Uncertain World" distinguishes between the "optimistic non-alignment" of the past giving way to "realistic multiple engagements of the future". Multi-alignment means having a series of parallel relationships that strengthen bilateral partnerships and seek a common approach towards major issues in a multi-polar world with multiple power dynamics. Dr.S.Jaishankar in his book articulates this concept aptly stating: *"This is the time for us to engage America, manage China, cultivate Europe, reassure Russia,*

bring Japan into play, draw neighbours in, extend the neighbourhood and expand traditional constituencies of support".

India under PM Modi has taken several initiatives to engage with the world with a totally different approach, commensurate with its growing global stature.

i. Ties with the United States:

India-US relations have changed from a feeling of mistrust and squandered chances in the past to a strategic alliance built on shared values, democracy and defending the rules-based international system. The US has emerged as India's largest trading partner and at multilateral organizations both countries are working closely together. In 2021 the US joined the International Solar Alliance (ISA), which is based in India. A partnership between the two nations is essential for maintaining an Indo-Pacific region that is free, open, and governed by laws, and the US renamed its Pacific command as Indo-Pacific command to better reflect the significance of this alliance. The state visit by Prime Minister Modi to the US in June 2023 has strengthened the two countries' strategic alliance even more.

India's trade with the U.S.

The U.S. became India's largest trading partner last year (In billions of dollars)

Fiscal year ending March
Source: Government of India, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Department of Commerce
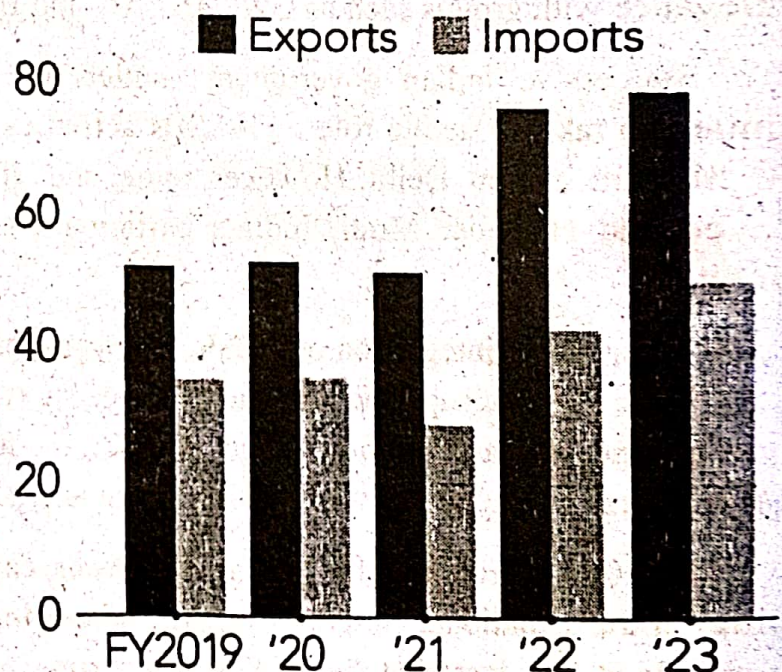

ii. Ties with Russia:

India has always considered Russia as a reliable partner which played a major role in enhancing its military capabilities, supported it at the UN and provided space to pursue strategic autonomy. Post Russia's invasion of Ukraine, India faced challenges in its bilateral ties. India balanced its support for the principle of territorial sovereignty and integrity while not voting against Russia at the UN. India is also purchasing large quantity of oil from Russia at discounted prices, despite strong objections from western countries.

India's trade with Russia

Despite Western sanctions on Russia, India's imports from there have ballooned since 2022
(In billions of dollars)

Fiscal year ending March
Source: Government of India, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Department of Commerce

■ Exports ▧ Imports
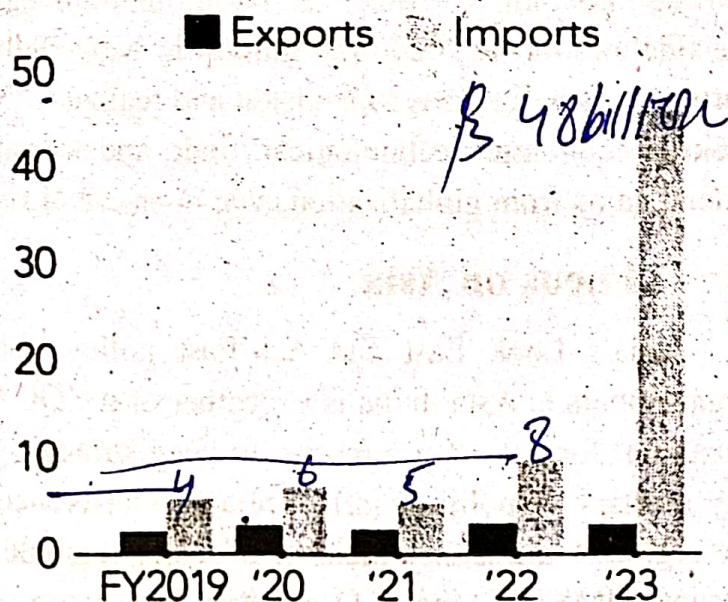
iii. Relations with Israel:

India's relations with Israel have grown manifold after it delinked the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from its ties with Israel. Although India officially recognized Israel in 1950, diplomatic ties were established only in 1992. Today Israeli companies have invested in India in energy, renewable energy, telecom, real estate, water technologies and R&D centres. India is negotiating with Israel for concluding an one of the largest importers of defense equipment from Israel. PM Modi was one of the first world leaders to condemn the attack on Israel by Hamas.

More than personal, leader-level affinities, however, broader changes in India's geopolitical approach to the Middle East during Modi's tenure complemented and reinforced the logic of India's existing ties to Israel. In particular, India deepened its economic and diplomatic ties with the Arab Gulf states, especially the UAE, diversifying from a history of closer relationships with Iran and Egypt. These shifts coincided with the gradual thawing of relations between the UAE and Israel, which ultimately culminated in the 2020 signing of the Abraham Accords.

"Since the establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Israel in 1992, bilateral trade and economic relations have progressed rapidly. From US$ 200 million in 1992 (comprising primarily of diamonds), merchandise trade diversified and reached US$ 10.77 billion (excluding defense) in FY 2022-23, with Indian merchandise exports to Israel at US$ 8.45 billion and Israeli merchandise exports to India at US$ 2.32 billion. In FY 2023-24 (April-October), the bilateral trade stands at US$ 4.42 billion (excluding defense)."

(https://www.indembassyisrael.gov.in/)

From there, it was a relatively small step to creative diplomatic initiatives like the "minilateral" I2U2 that first brought together the foreign ministers of India, Israel, UAE and the United States in 2021, and the recent announcement of the India-Middle East-

Europe Economic Corridor, an ambitious transregional connectivity plan announced on the sidelines of the 2023 G20 summit in New Delhi. All told, Modi's India was an eager partner in Israeli efforts to envision and realize a "New Middle East" defined by forward looking economic, technological, trade and transit initiatives intended to preserve and extend gains from globalization even in an era of rising global geopolitical competition.

iv. Focus on Asia:

India's Look East and Act East policy under PM Modi have led to multiple engagements in Asia. India is a member of the QUAD which also partners Japan, US and Australia, formed with a motive to keep strategic sea routes in the Indo-Pacific free of any military or political influence and interference, and counter Chinese domination in the region. India is also member of major regional groupings such as ASEAN Regional Forum, BIMSTEC, Indian Ocean Rim Association, SAARC, SCO, etc.

India's trade with Russia

Despite Western sanctions on Russia, India's imports from there have ballooned since 2022
(In billions of dollars)

Fiscal year ending March
Source: Government of India, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Department of Commerce
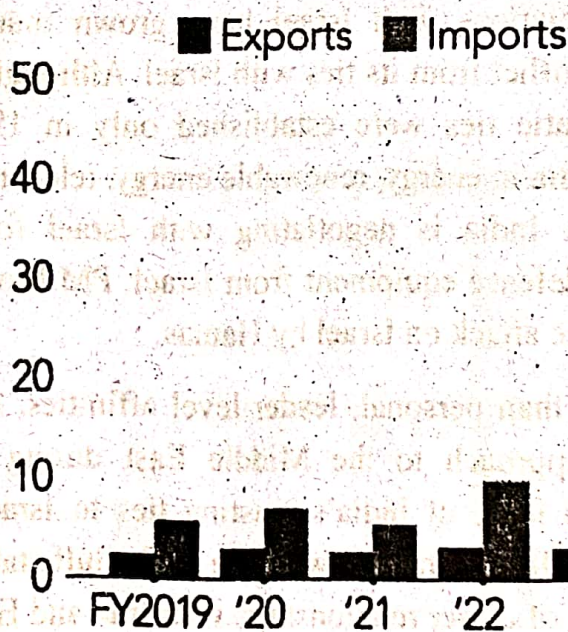
Source: Press Information Bureau, Govt of India

v. Relations with China:

India faces one of its biggest challenges from China. Despite several border skirmishes, both countries are trying to maintain good relations, which is partly due to the maturity shown by New Delhi in dealing with Beijing, while on one hand increasing bilateral trade and on the other hand showing a tough posture on border issues. India plays a dominant role in South Asia and the Indian Ocean (considered as India's Ocean), but as China extends its reach in the region, its attitude towards India has become more assertive. Under PM Modi, India remained steadfast in preventing Chinese hegemony in Asia, emphasizing that a multipolar Asia is necessary for a multipolar world.

- Bilateral trade between India and China in FY23 stood at US$ 113.83 billion. —
- As of 2022-23, China was India's third-largest trading partner.
- Bilateral trade between India and China reached US$ 115.83 billion in 2021 against US$ 86.39 billion in 2020 with a growth of 34%.
- In the year 2020, India became the 16th largest trade partner of China.
- India and China bilateral trade continued to boom. Total trade between India and China has increased 29% in the last five years to US$ 115 billion in the financial year 2021-22 from US$ 89.72 billion in the financial year 2017-18.
- In FY22, China had a 15.4% share in India's total imports. India imported goods worth US$ 613.2 billion from the world, including goods worth US$ 94.2 billion from China.

vi. Ties with Middle-East:—

Recognizing importance of the Middle East, PM Modi focused on significantly enhancing ties with countries in the region. Strengthening ties with Gulf countries ensures a stable and reliable energy supply which is crucial for India's growing economy. Coinciding with Pakistan's strategic decline in the region, India transformed its relations with Saudi Arabia and UAE into strategic partnerships, while improving relations with Iran and Oman. A landmark development was the formation of I2U2, a 4-nation grouping formed in 2021 bringing India, Israel, US and UAE together to pursue collaboration and address common challenges. UAE, Saudi Arabia, Oman and Bahrain are members of. An agreement is being negotiated between India and Gulf Cooperation Council. The region houses millions of Indians who play a vital role in India's economy through remittances.

"India Ups Its Game in the Middle East. India's response to the earthquake emergency in Turkey and Syria is not just humanitarian. It's strategic."

(Hussain Haqqani - The Diplomat – Feb 15, 2023)

Throughout 2023, the India-UAE relationship saw significant advancements, especially in trade, defence, and multilateral cooperation.

"The India-UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), implemented on May 1, 2022, significantly impacted bilateral trade. In the fiscal year 2022-23, trade between the two countries reached a historic high of around USD 84.5 billion, marking a year-on-year increase of 16 per cent. Indian exports to the UAE also recorded remarkable growth, reaching USD 31.6 billion, a 12 per cent increase from the previous year."

India has emerged as a significant player in the Middle East, marking a shift in its regional role over the past decade. India-Israel ties have deepened, particularly in high tech and defense. The Gulf states, including the UAE and Saudi Arabia, are keen on enhancing relations with India, driven by economic interests and a shared goal of

containing Islamist extremism. Saudi Arabia aims to expand its energy relationship with India, exploring plans to link energy grids. Egypt, too, seeks stronger ties with India, leveraging its gateway status for trade with Africa and Europe.

"India Has Become a Middle Eastern Power."

(Steven A. Cook – The Foreign Policy – JUNE 30, 2023)

a. The India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC):

On 10 September 2023, at the G20 summit held in New Delhi, the leaders of France, Germany, India, Italy, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, the United States, and the European Commission unveiled the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC). This ambitious trade and investment initiative is comprised of an eastern corridor connecting India to the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Israel, and a northern corridor linking those Middle Eastern countries to Europe. IMEC will supplement road and maritime transport routes that already exist, aiming to increase connectivity and economic integration between Asia and Europe via energy infrastructure, railways, high-speed cables, and shipping lanes. The countries participating in IMEC constitute 40 percent of the world's population and roughly 50 percent of the global economy. This corridor will rely on the UAE and Saudi Arabia's seaports, roads, and logistics hubs, serving to strengthen these Gulf Arab states' importance as critical nodes in global trade routes.

vii. Relations with Japan:

India and Japan share a Special Strategic and Global Partnership which is rooted in spiritual affinity, strong cultural and civilizational ties. They share similar views on regional security and economic growth with common strategic interests.

"During FY 2022-23, bilateral trade between Japan and India amounted to US$21.96 billion."

(https://www.india briefing.com)

Year	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
India's Export to Japan	6.10	6.81	5.38	4.66	3.85	4.73	4.86	4.52	4.43	6.18	5.46
India's Import from Japan	12.41	948	10.13	9.85	9.75	10.97	12.77	12.43	10.9	14.39	16.94
India Japan Trade	18.51	16.92	15.15	14.15	13.06	15.71	17.63	16.95	15.33	20.57	21.96

Source: The export-import statistics for the last five years as per India's Ministry of Commerce data bank.

PM Modi and the late Shinzo Abe built a personal rapport and under them both countries have been active members of forums such as the QUAD and ASEAN, and have sought to build coalitions with like-minded countries to maintain regional stability and counter China's assertiveness in the region. India has been the largest recipient of Japanese financial assistance for many decades with Delhi Metro and under-implementation bullet train project being examples of Indo-Japanese cooperation.

viii. Multi-lateral Associations:

India's participation in multi-lateral organizations is a crucial aspect of its foreign policy as they provide a platform to defend and advance its interests. India is part of several multi-lateral groups, including G20, BRICS, SCO, SAARC, BIMSTEC, ASEAN Regional Forum, Indian Ocean Rim Association and QUAD. The recently concluded G20 summit in New Delhi under India's Presidency coincided with its 75th Year of Independence. The theme for the G20 Summit 2023 was Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam – One Earth, One Family, One Future. All these activities point towards India's aspiration to emerge as the voice of the Global South.

In addition to engaging with major powers, PM Modi has also given importance to building relations with many other countries in all parts of the world. India is determined to use all options to explore opportunities to further its national interests. During Covid-19 pandemic, while taking care of its 1.3 billion citizens, India also helped 150 countries fight the crisis by providing them with made-in-India vaccines under its Vaccine Maitri initiative, when other major powers were hoarding vaccines for their citizens. In the words of Dr.S.Jaishankar *"Indian foreign policy is a relentless quest to go up the international order"*.

On one hand, India is part of the US led QUAD grouping whose primary focus is to contain China's rise, on the other India is also part of the BRICS grouping led by Russia and China. Dr.Jaishankar in an interview refused to be drawn into taking sides of any particular group and said that India is entitled to make its decisions keeping its national interests in mind.

In an interaction with the Indian Community at '*Bharat Ki Baat, Sabke Saath*' program in London on April 18, 2018, when asked about how India would engage with the rest of the world, PM Modi said *"Na hum aankh jhuka kar baat karenge, na aankh dikhaa kar baat karenge. Hum duniya se aankh mila kar baat karenge"* (we will not lower our eyes, nor stare while talking to others, we will look eye to eye when talking with rest of the world).

Even as it champions the cause of the Global South, New Delhi is part of the U.S.-led Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, or Quad, along with Australia and Japan. It is also a member of the China- and Russia-led Shanghai Cooperation Organization,

maintaining that it engages with partners globally based on its national interests. This demonstrates India's confidence in its foreign policy, which has evolved from non-alignment to multi-alignment.

3. INDIA'S GAINING PROMINENCE ON GLOBAL STAGE

India's recent geopolitical positioning under Prime Minister Narendra Modi reflects a values-based leadership approach and a commitment to global cooperation rooted in a human-centric vision of peace and progress. This approach, marked by soft power, non-violence, and strategic autonomy, has come to fruition, making India an active player in global politics rather than a bystander. Prime Minister Modi's leadership has been instrumental in shaping outcomes aligned with India's national interests and the philosophy of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, emphasizing a sense of global inter-connectedness.

India's role on the global stage has expanded significantly, leveraging its unique attributes, including a demographic advantage and economic growth potential. The government's visionary and astute initiatives have integrated the various elements that contribute to India's strengths in an uncertain world. The G20, under India's presidency, exemplified this global leadership by refocusing on financial and economic issues while managing geopolitical complexities among diverse groups like the UN Security Council P-5, G7, BRICS, IBSA, and Quad—all part of the G20.

India's success in leading the G20 was attributed to its inclusive approach, encapsulated in the policy of "leaving none behind" in global outreach. The G20 New Delhi Leaders' Declaration, which addressed macro-economic stability, digital public infrastructure, sustainable development goals, climate challenges, and multilateral reforms, exemplified this inclusive ethos. The inclusion of the African Union as the G20's newest member underscored India's commitment to Africa in its foreign policy.

Prior to the G20 presidency, India had already demonstrated leadership in various areas. Initiatives like the vaccine assistance program during the pandemic, the International Solar Alliance (ISA) for green energy, the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI), and Infrastructure for Resilient Island States (IRIS) all embody India's commitment to "One Earth, One World, One Future." These initiatives showcase India's proactive engagement and leadership within the Global South, contributing to a more interconnected and sustainable world.

4. HOW INDIA'S RECORD-BREAKING POPULATION WILL SHAPE THE WORLD:

India is set to become the world's most populous country, surpassing China by July 2023, according to a U.N. report. The record-breaking number of births on New Year's Day 2021 contributed to this trend. With a population of 1.428 billion, India's

young demographic, with 650 million people below the age of 25, is a key factor. Despite historic family-planning challenges, the growth rate has slowed due to improvements in education, healthcare, and poverty alleviation.

The demographic shift marks a paradigm shift for India's development, presenting both challenges and opportunities. India's young population is seen as a demographic dividend, potentially boosting the economy. The working-age population reached 900 million in 2021, contributing to India's importance on the global stage. With a dynamic and tech-savvy generation, India aims to leverage its human resources for economic growth, international influence, and technological advancement.

5. INDIA AS AN ASPIRING ECONOMIC SUPERPOWER:

India has quietly ascended to the position of the world's fifth-largest economy, surpassing the UK, and is poised to secure the third spot behind the US and China by 2030. The nation's economic growth, marked by a 13.8% GDP increase in the second quarter of the year, is fueled by private sector liberalization, a growing working population, and shifts in global supply chains away from China. Indian billionaires like Gautam Adani and Mukesh Ambani have amassed substantial wealth, symbolizing India's economic strength. The country's challenge now is to enhance its manufacturing sector and position itself as a major exporter, leveraging its demographic advantages and geopolitical shifts in international supply chains.

India is poised for significant economic growth, with various positive trends converging in demand, supply, and facilitating factors. On the demand side, a consumer boom, context-appropriate innovation, and a green transition are driving economic expansion. Supply-side forces include a demographic dividend, improved access to finance, and infrastructure upgrades. System-wide facilitators encompass domestic policy reforms, a favorable geopolitical position, and the influential Indian diaspora. Despite these positive indicators, challenges persist, including unbalanced growth, unrealized demographic potential, and hurdles in ease-of-business and innovation. Successful navigation through these challenges could propel India into the role of an economic powerhouse.

6. THE RISING SOFT POWER OF INDIA:

From hosting a successful G20 Summit to rewriting the annals of space exploration and making the world dance to Naatu Naatu, 2023 saw India establish itself as more than a soft power.

The year 2023 marked a significant milestone for India, as evidenced by the dominant themes in the headlines and what gained popularity. The country successfully hosted the G20 Summit, marking a significant milestone in international diplomacy and cooperation. Additionally, India made remarkable strides in space exploration, contributing to a historic chapter in this field. Beyond these achievements, India's cultural

impact was vividly demonstrated through the global popularity of the song "Naatu Naatu", which captivated audiences worldwide. These accomplishments collectively underscored India's evolution beyond merely a soft power, showcasing its multifaceted strengths and influence on the global stage.

India's Ascent As a Global Frontrunner In Space Technology And Exploration:

India scripted history on August 23 with its Chandrayaan-3 spacecraft successfully landing on the Moon. With this feat, it became the first country to soft-land on the south pole of the lunar surface. In a swift follow-up to the lunar success. Isro launched Aditya-L1, India's first space-based solar observatory. This mission is set to deepen our understanding of the Sun by studying its outermost layer, the corona, which has profound implications for space weather forecasting.

The success of Chandrayaan-3 significantly enhances India's diplomatic standing on the global stage by showcasing the country's technological prowess and achievements in space exploration. As India establishes itself as a key player in space missions, it not only gains respect but also strengthens its diplomatic influence. The Chandrayaan-3 mission, landing a lunar rover on the moon's south pole, demonstrates India's capabilities to the world, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's emphasis on the achievement as a victory for all of humanity positions India as a responsible and capable contributor to global scientific endeavors. This success not only bolsters India's soft power but also opens avenues for collaboration with other nations in space exploration and related technological advancements, further solidifying its diplomatic position on the international stage.

"India's space program bolsters its internal development, having made important contributions even in seemingly unrelated areas, such as disaster management, education, health care, agriculture, fisheries and urban planning. Moreover, it serves India's global diplomacy, enhancing the country's credibility and influence. Those who once scoffed at the idea that a poor developing country aspired to send rockets into space must concede that India is a technological force to be reckoned with."

(Shashi Tharoor - The Strategist -6 Sep 2023)

7. REGIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF INDIA'S GEOPOLITICAL AND ECONOMIC RISE: THE CONSEQUENCES TO CONSIDER

India continues to climb the economic ladder and was recently declared the fifth largest economy of the world after overtaking the United Kingdom. This economic transformation carries profound consequences for South Asia, especially Pakistan. India's increasing energy needs, likely to be sourced from the Middle East, and its emphasis on securing raw materials, signal a shift in regional dynamics. The intensifying competition between India and China may lead to bidding wars for regional alliances, impacting

smaller nations like Bhutan and Nepal, while Bangladesh and Sri Lanka navigate relations with both India and China.

i. Regional Instability:

India's rising geopolitical influence has dual implications for regional stability. While contributing to economic growth, it introduces complexities leading to potential instability. Strategic competition with China escalates tensions, risking disruptions in South Asia. Smaller nations may navigate diplomatic challenges, and historical conflicts, like the one with Pakistan over Kashmir, may intensify, adding layers of instability.

ii. Raised stakes in Kashmir

India's ascendancy need not be a zero-sum game, citing instances like the US maintaining military support to Islamabad. However, such instances appear exceptional, overshadowed by historical trends where messages from former US Presidents have subtly indicated Washington's aspirations in the region. The recent emphasis on India's role, coupled with diminished support for Pakistan, particularly in the context of the Kashmir conflict, underscores a geopolitical recalibration. The United States' unbalanced support for India amid the Kashmir border dispute, despite human rights concerns, has raised questions about the consistency of its foreign policy values. The apparent silence on India's actions in Kashmir, including autonomy revocation, internet blackouts, and political repression, contrasts starkly with its stringent stance on Pakistan, potentially inviting instability in South Asia and undermining stated US interests in the region. As India's significance grows, the geopolitical landscape in the Kashmir conflict becomes more intricate, adding a layer of complexity to an already tense security architecture in the region.

iii. Maritime Influence in the Indian Ocean:

India's economic and military growth asserts it as a key player in the Indian Ocean. The expansion of the Indian Navy and strategic partnerships aims to safeguard maritime interests. However, competition, especially with China's Belt and Road Initiative, adds complexity. Careful diplomacy is crucial for managing tensions and fostering collective security in the region.

ii. Nuclear Arms Race:

India's increasing economic and military capabilities, along with advancements in nuclear capabilities, may contribute to a nuanced strategic environment. This dynamic has the potential to fuel a nuclear arms race, influencing Pakistan's strategic calculus. Diplomatic efforts and confidence-building measures are crucial to prevent escalation, with international actors playing a vital role in ensuring a stable South Asian geopolitical landscape.

iii. Increased risk of Chinese retaliation

India's ascending geopolitical stature has not only altered its dynamics with the United States but has also heightened the potential for escalation with China, placing their interests in direct competition. Collaborative efforts with key allies, such as Japan and Australia, aimed at countering Chinese influence in the East and South China Sea, underscore India's strategic repositioning. Japan's Indo-Pacific plan, urging India to contribute to maritime warning and surveillance capabilities, along with deeper ties with Australia focusing on maritime security initiatives, signal a collective effort to curtail China's presence in disputed territories. The perceived targeting of Chinese interests in these regions has already prompted warnings of "conflict and confrontation" from Chinese leadership, illustrating the tensions generated by these strategic maneuvers.

iv. Water Dispute:

India's economic and agricultural growth impacts water disputes, especially concerning shared rivers. Upstream activities like dam construction may lead to disputes over water access. Diplomatic efforts and cooperative agreements are essential to ensure equitable and sustainable water management, addressing challenges and promoting stability in the region.

v. Diminishing Image of Pakistan:

India's ascent poses challenges to Pakistan's global image. Managing this challenge requires effective diplomacy, showcasing strengths, fostering economic growth, and participating in international initiatives. Strategic communication is key to ensuring that Pakistan's image remains nuanced and does not suffer disproportionately in the wake of India's geopolitical rise.

vi. Growing Influence on Multilateral Platforms:

India's growing influence on multilateral platforms, like G20 and BRICS, marks a significant shift in global power dynamics. With economic clout and diplomatic prowess, India shapes global agendas. However, questions arise about power redistribution and potential shifts in geopolitical alignments. Navigating diplomatic relationships and alliances becomes crucial as India's voice gains prominence globally.

8. HOW SHOULD PAKISTAN COUNTER THE RISE OF HEGEMONIC OF INDIA?

To counter the rise of India's hegemony, Pakistan should employ a comprehensive strategy encompassing diplomatic engagement, international diplomacy, conflict resolution, promotion of regional stability, military deterrence, counter-narratives, engagement with international institutions, and human rights advocacy.

i. Diplomatic Engagement:

Pakistan should prioritize strengthening diplomatic efforts to engage with India, focusing on addressing concerns through sustained dialogue. The promotion of diplomatic channels is essential to fostering understanding and resolving outstanding issues between the two nations.

ii. International Diplomacy:

Garnering international support is crucial for Pakistan. By presenting a compelling case on the global stage, Pakistan can seek allies and partners who may be willing to mediate or facilitate diplomatic solutions. Active engagement in international diplomacy enhances Pakistan's standing and promotes its interests.

iii. Conflict Resolution:

Actively pursuing a peaceful resolution of outstanding issues, particularly the Kashmir dispute, is paramount. Pakistan should engage in negotiations and dialogue with India and explore international mediation with the consent of all involved parties to achieve lasting solutions.

iv. Promotion of Regional Stability:

Advocating for regional stability and cooperation is a key pillar of Pakistan's strategy. Emphasizing the importance of a peaceful and interconnected South Asia, Pakistan should encourage collaborative efforts with neighboring countries to address common challenges and promote regional harmony.

v. Military Deterrence:

Maintaining a credible defense posture is essential for deterring aggression from India. Clearly communicating a commitment to national security while avoiding actions that may escalate tensions is crucial for ensuring a stable security environment.

vi. Counter Narratives:

Pakistan should develop and promote counter-narratives to counter any negative propaganda. Highlighting areas of cooperation and shared interests, while actively addressing misinformation, helps shape a positive perception of Pakistan on the global stage.

vii. International Institutions:

Engaging with international institutions and organizations is vital for Pakistan. Utilizing platforms like the United Nations to highlight concerns and seek support strengthens Pakistan's position and fosters international cooperation.

viii. Human Rights Advocacy:

Advocating for human rights and drawing attention to any perceived violations is an important aspect of Pakistan's strategy. By presenting a case based on human rights concerns, Pakistan can attract international attention and support for its cause.

It's crucial for Pakistan to approach these measures with a focus on constructive dialogue, peaceful resolution, and the promotion of regional stability. Open communication channels, international cooperation, and a commitment to addressing concerns through diplomatic means can contribute to diffusing tensions and fostering a more stable and secure South Asia.

9. CONCLUSION:

India's trajectory on the global stage reflects a remarkable evolution in its foreign policy, transitioning from non-alignment to multi-alignment. The strategic recalibration of ties with the United States, Russia, Israel, and a heightened focus on Asia, particularly through initiatives like the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) and partnerships with Japan, underscores India's growing prominence. With a record-breaking population and burgeoning economic prowess, India aspires to be a global superpower, further accentuating its influence in various domains, including space technology. However, this rise brings regional implications that necessitate careful consideration, from potential instabilities and heightened stakes in Kashmir to maritime influence in the Indian Ocean and the risk of a nuclear arms race. For neighboring Pakistan, addressing the challenges posed by India's hegemonic ascent requires a multifaceted approach, involving diplomatic engagement, conflict resolution, regional stability promotion, military deterrence, counter-narratives, engagement with international institutions, and human rights advocacy. As both nations navigate this complex geopolitical landscape, fostering dialogue and cooperation becomes imperative to ensure sustainable peace and stability in the region.

THE BEST BOOKS FOR UNDERSTANDING THE DYNAMICS OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

1. The India Way: Strategies for an Uncertain World by S Jaishankar

The decade from the 2008 global financial crisis to the 2020 coronavirus pandemic has seen a real transformation of the world order. The very nature of international relations and its rules are changing before our eyes. For India, this means optimal relationships with all the major powers to best advance its goals. It also requires a bolder and non-reciprocal approach to the immediate and extended neighbourhood. A global footprint is now in the making that leverages Indias greater capability and relevance, as well as its unique diaspora. This era of global upheaval entails greater

expectations from India, putting it on the path to becoming a leading power. In The India Way, S. Jaishankar, Indias Minister of External Affairs, analyses these challenges and spells out possible policy responses. In doing so, he is very conscious of balancing Indias national interest with international responsibilities. He places this thinking in the context of history and tradition, appropriate for a civilizational power that seeks to reclaim its place on the world stage.

2. The Indian Renaissance: India's Rise After a Thousand Years of Decline by Sanjeev Sanyal

India's recent economic performance has attracted world attention but the country is re-awakening not just as an economy but as a civilization. After a thousand years of the decline, it now has a genuine opportunity to re-establish itself as a major global power. In

"The Indian Renaissance", the author, Sanjeev Sanyal, looks at the processes that led to ten centuries of fossilization and then at the powerful economic and social forces that are now working together to transform India beyond recognition. These range from demographic shifts to rising literacy levels, but the most important revolution has been the opening of mind and the changed attitude towards innovation and risk. This book is about how India found itself at this historic juncture, the obstacles that it still needs to negotiate and the future that it may enjoy. The author tells the story from the perspective of the new generation of Indians who have emerged from this great period of change.

3. In Spite of the Gods: The Rise of Modern India by Edward Luce

As the world's largest democracy and a rising international economic power, India has long been heralded for its great strides in technology and trade. Yet it is also plagued by poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, and a vast array of other social and economic issues. Here, noted journalist and former Financial Times South Asia bureau chief Edward Luce travels throughout India's many regions, cultures, and religious circles, investigating its fragile balance between tradition and modernity. From meetings with key political figures to fascinating encounters with religious pundits, economic gurus, and village laborers, In Spite of the Gods is a fascinating blend of analysis and reportage that comprehensively depicts the nuances of India's complex situation and its place in the world.

4. India Becoming A Global Power In The Twenty-First Century: Rising Challenges and Newer Opportunities by Raj Kumar Kothari

During the Cold War era, India was positioned on the periphery of global politics resulting in minimal or no influence on major issues affecting the international system. New Delhi had focused on the third world solidarity through Non-Aligned movement, and complete nuclear Disarmament to make its presence felt on the international stage. The arena of international politics was largely dominated, guided and controlled by the major powers that determined the trajectory of global politics. Today, because of its

meteoric rise in economic strength and military capability, India has moved to the centre of global politics. In this backdrop, the present volume extensively focuses on the conceptual and theoretical aspects centring on the myth and reality of India's rise as a global power. Introduction apart, the book has been divided into three parts based on conceptual, theoretical and strategic considerations. Section one deals with conceptual and theoretical issues that explain the very nature of India's rise in the direction of becoming a global power since early 1990s, I.E. In the post-Cold war years. Section two focuses on the strategically important areas from the perspective of India becoming a potential global power in the twenty-first century. The third and final section attempts to show how far or to what extent new Delhi March towards global power status has been practiced into reality through assessing India's bilateral relations with some of the major powers like China and Japan, and a few strategically important neighbours—Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Myanmar. The book would be very useful to the students of international relations, researchers, diplomats and policy make Rs and evoke further scholarly debates on the issues taken up.

THE RISE OF AI: NAVIGATING GLOBAL CHALLENGES, HARNESSING OPPORTUNITIES, AND CRAFTING A RESPONSIBLE FUTURE

Synopsis:

THE RISE OF AI: NAVIGATING GLOBAL CHALLENGES, HARNESSING OPPORTUNITIES, AND CRAFTING A RESPONSIBLE FUTURE

1. INTRODUCTION

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a groundbreaking field that has witnessed remarkable progress in recent years, revolutionizing various aspects of our lives. At its core, AI refers to the development of computer systems capable of performing tasks that typically require human intelligence. This encompasses a broad spectrum, from natural language processing and problem-solving to visual perception and decision-making. The rapid evolution of AI is marked by significant advancements in machine learning, particularly deep learning, which enables systems to learn and improve from experience. This progress has propelled AI into diverse fields, such as healthcare, finance, education, and beyond. In healthcare, AI aids in diagnostics and personalized medicine, while in finance, it enhances predictive analytics and risk management. In education, AI is transforming the learning experience through adaptive learning platforms and intelligent tutoring systems.

However, as AI continues its upward trajectory, it is essential to acknowledge and address its potential drawbacks. Concerns include ethical considerations, bias in algorithms, job displacement due to automation, and issues related to privacy and security. These challenges underscore the importance of responsible development and deployment of AI technologies. Looking ahead, the way forward involves striking a balance between innovation and ethical considerations. Emphasizing transparency, accountability, and fairness in AI development is crucial to building trust and mitigating potential risks. Collaboration between industry leaders, policymakers, and researchers is essential to establishing robust guidelines and frameworks that guide the responsible use of AI.

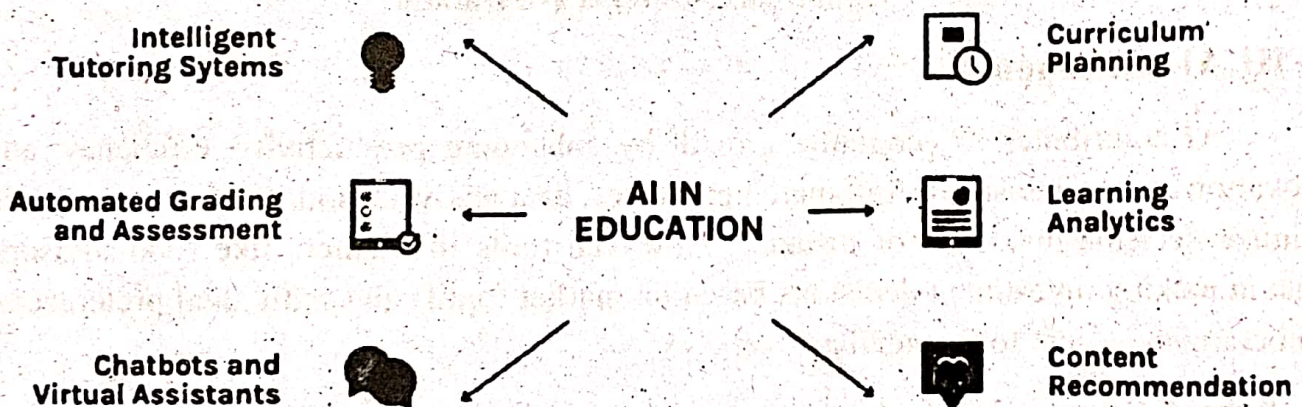## 2. APPLICATIONS OF AI ACROSS VARIOUS DOMAINS

I. AI in Education:

AI is revolutionizing education by personalizing learning experiences, adapting to individual needs, and enhancing overall educational outcomes. Intelligent tutoring systems use AI algorithms to assess students' strengths and weaknesses, providing tailored lessons and feedback. For example, platforms like Khan Academy and Duolingo leverage AI to create customized learning paths, making education more engaging and effective.

- Adaptive Learning Platforms
- Intelligent Tutoring Systems
- Automated Grading Systems

AI IN EDUCATION

Applications of Artificial Intelligence in Education

Intelligent Tutoring Sytems

Curriculum Planning

Automated Grading and Assessment

AI IN EDUCATION

Learning Analytics

Chatbots and Virtual Assistants

Content Recommendation

II. AI in Healthcare:

The healthcare sector benefits from AI in numerous ways, such as improved diagnostics, treatment optimization, and personalized medicine. Machine learning algorithms analyze vast datasets, aiding in disease detection and prediction. IBM's Watson for Oncology, for instance, utilizes AI to assist oncologists in identifying treatment options based on patient data, leading to more precise and timely interventions.

- Disease Prediction Models
- Personalized Treatment Plans
- Robot-Assisted Surgery

Applications of AI in Healthcare

Rare Disease Diagnostics & Treatment

Drug Development

Virtual Nursing Assitance

Medical Diagnosis

Fraud Detection

Dosage Error Reduction

Cybersecurity

Cancer Research

Gene Editing

Personalized Healthcare Plans

AI Robot-Assisted Surgery

Health Monitoring & Wearables
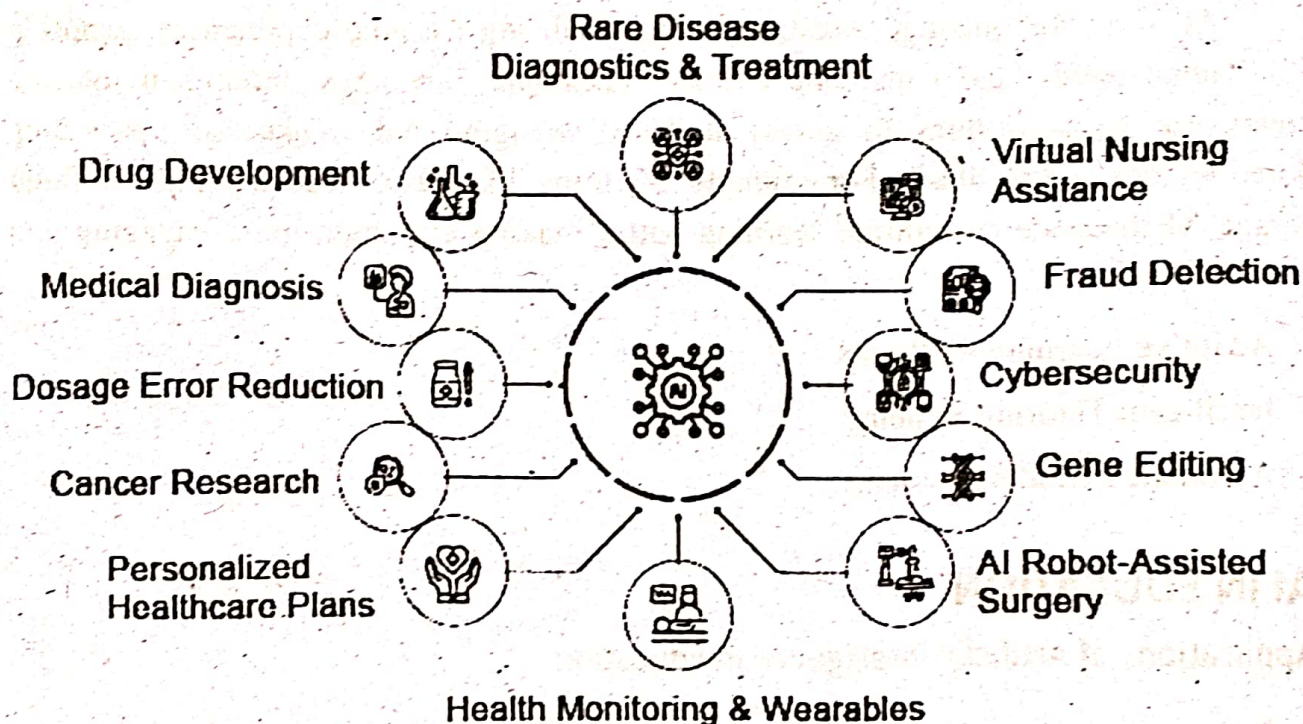
III. AI in Economy:

AI contributes to economic growth by enhancing productivity, efficiency, and innovation across industries. Automated processes, data analysis, and predictive modeling optimize decision-making. For instance, AI-driven tools in finance, like robo-advisors, assist in making investment decisions based on market trends and individual preferences, democratizing access to financial advice.

- Robo-Advisors in Finance
- Supply Chain Optimization
- Fraud Detection in Banking

IV. AI in Employment:

Contrary to concerns about job displacement, AI creates new job opportunities and augments human capabilities. Automation of routine tasks allows workers to focus on more creative, complex, and strategic aspects of their roles. Additionally, the development and maintenance of AI systems generate demand for skilled professionals, from data scientists to AI ethicists.

- HR and Recruitment Automation
- Skills Gap Analysis
- AI-Assisted Creativity

V. AI in Information Technology:

AI enhances information processing and retrieval, making it easier to sift through vast amounts of data. Natural Language Processing (NLP) enables sentiment analysis, language translation, and chatbots, improving communication and accessibility of information. Virtual assistants like Siri and Alexa demonstrate how AI simplifies everyday tasks by providing information and performing actions through voice commands.

- Chatbots for Customer Service

- Natural Language Processing (NLP) Applications

- Content Recommendation Systems

VI. AI in Governance:

Governments worldwide are leveraging AI for improved governance, from optimizing public services to enhancing decision-making processes. Predictive analytics helps in resource allocation, crime prevention, and disaster response. Singapore's Smart Nation initiative utilizes AI for urban planning, traffic management, and public services, showcasing the potential for smart governance through AI integration.

- Predictive Policing

- Smart City Initiatives

- E-Government Services

3. AI NATIONALISM: GLOBAL COMPETITION

I. . Introduction to the Era of AI Nationalism

Definition of AI Nationalism: AI nationalism refers to the strategic efforts of nations to assert control and dominance in the realm of artificial intelligence (AI). It involves a concerted push by governments to position their countries as leaders in AI development and utilization.

Significance of the Year 2023: The year 2023 witnessed a remarkable surge in global efforts aimed at controlling technological destinies, particularly within the AI domain. Governments worldwide intensified their focus on AI technologies, signaling a paradigm shift in technological competition and strategic positioning.

II. Emergence of Global AI Champions

Key Events in AI Development: Noteworthy occurrences in 2023 included the establishment of ai71 in Abu Dhabi, Mistral's substantial funding round in France, and Krutrim's pioneering role in developing India's multilingual large language models (llms).

AI Companies as National Representatives: These entities transcend being mere technological firms; they aim to represent their respective nations' technological prowess on the global AI stage. Their successes are perceived as national achievements.

III. Geopolitical Dynamics of AI

US-China Technological Competition: The escalating technological rivalry between the United States and China has spurred colossal investments in AI. Both nations have pledged substantial sums, $40-50 billion each, to lead in AI development, fostering a competitive global landscape.

Commitment of Other Nations: Beyond the US-China axis, countries like Britain, France, Germany, India, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE have collectively committed around $40 billion to AI initiatives. This collective investment shapes emerging AI-industrial complexes worldwide.

IV. Approaches to AI Development

United States Strategy: The US boasts a vibrant private sector driving rapid innovation. Concurrently, the federal government allocates funds, approximately $50 billion, to bolster domestic chipmaking capabilities, reducing reliance on foreign manufacturers. Additionally, strict export controls are enforced to restrict AI technology sales to adversaries.

China's AI Strategy: China's response involves massive investments, nearly $300 billion, to build a domestic chip supply chain immune to Western sanctions. State-backed guidance funds and government-led initiatives shape the country's technological direction.

Gulf States' Approach: Nations like Saudi Arabia and the UAE, being technologically agile and financially robust, invest substantially in GPUs, energy, and human capital. Their strategy involves attracting top-tier talent to universities and fostering advancements such as the Falcon model by ai71.

European Union and Other Strategies: The EU and certain member states adopt a blend of US and Chinese approaches. Initiatives include incentivizing domestic chipmaking, financial support for AI and supercomputing, production-linked incentives in India, and encouraging cloud-computing providers to establish data centers.

V. Risks and Challenges of AI Nationalism

Potential Risks: Nations' endeavors to gain control over AI technologies carry inherent risks. America's restrictive measures may strain international relationships, while China's heavy regulation might offset potential gains. Building models for local languages may also prove challenging amid evolving multilingual landscapes.

The era of AI nationalism unfolds amid intense global competition and strategic maneuvering. Nations invest billions in shaping AI's future; yet the associated risks and challenges highlight the intricate nature of navigating the transformative landscape of artificial intelligence.

4. DRAWBACKS OF AI:

I. AI and Digital War

i. Digital Cold War Dynamics: The Battle for AI Dominance

The world is currently immersed in a transformative era marked by digitization, signifying a profound shift in global dynamics. Drawing parallels with historical conflicts, the comparison between the Cold War and the current digital age highlights a significant departure from ideological clashes to a digital confrontation, particularly between the USA and China. Termed as "Digital neo-Colonialism," this new era centers on data and technological dominance, redefining the nature of warfare and challenging established theories of international relations. The concept of "Computational-Hegemony" emphasizes the growing influence of technology, with nations like China strategically pursuing technological advancements for global harmony.

In this digital-cold war, the USA and China play leading roles, but the involvement of other major global powers signals the emergence of a multipolar world order. This shift is accompanied by uncertainties and potential conflicts, metaphorically described as a storm brewing in the digital age. The extension of technological influence to outer space further adds complexity, raising concerns about the militarization of space and its implications. As humanity navigates this uncharted territory, marked by constant surveillance and technological integration, the future remains unpredictable, underscoring the importance of strategic decision-making on a global scale to address the challenges and consequences of the ongoing digital transformation.

ii. AI Reshaping Espionage Dynamics

In the current era marked by increased nationalism and geopolitical competition, a "Digital Cold War" is unfolding, with the technology ecosystem splitting into spheres led by the United States and China. The competition extends beyond economics, encompassing strategic dominance in crucial technological areas, notably Artificial Intelligence (AI). Democratic nations, recognizing the shift towards localized supply chains, are urged to adopt a collaborative approach. The focus is on developing a unified strategy to counterbalance China's initiatives and prioritize openness, individual rights, and privacy in AI development. International collaboration is deemed essential for unlocking the full potential of AI, given its reliance on aggregated data. The Digital Cold War presents a dual challenge and opportunity, demanding responsible innovation and a cohesive response from democratic nations to ensure not just economic leadership but

also the preservation of democratic values in the face of global technological competition.

Calder Walton's book, *"Spies: The Epic Intelligence War Between East and West,"* offers a comprehensive exploration of a century of espionage, tracing its roots from the Russian Revolution to the present day. The intelligence landscape has witnessed a notable shift, with open-source intelligence now comprising 80% of information sharing compared to the predominantly clandestine collection during the Cold War. This transformation, coupled with China's strategic focus on mastering AI, machine learning, and quantum computing, marks a new era in intelligence competition. The private sector is anticipated to play a pivotal role in this paradigm shift. Challenges in responding to disinformation in the digital age are acknowledged, with the speed and complexity of information dissemination through social media posing new obstacles. The call for public-private cooperation, involving think tanks and universities, emerges as a critical strategy in navigating this evolved intelligence landscape. As the world grapples with the dynamics of a new Cold War, characterized by technological advancements, the intelligence community faces the imperative to adapt and collaborate across sectors to effectively address global challenges.

iii. 'The Gospel': how Israel uses AI to select bombing targets in Gaza

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) are reportedly utilizing an AI-based system called "the Gospel" to accelerate target selection in their military campaign against Hamas. The Gospel, part of the IDF's target administration division, employs artificial intelligence to produce rapid and automated recommendations for targeting, potentially increasing the efficiency of the lethal production line. While the IDF emphasizes precision and minimizing harm to non-combatants, concerns have been raised about the AI's role in decision-making, potential civilian casualties, and the risk of over-reliance on automated systems in complex human decisions. The IDF's use of AI in targeting has become a focal point amid the ongoing conflict with Hamas, with questions about the ethical implications and impact on civilian populations.

"A short statement on the IDF website claimed it was using an AI-based system called Habsora (the Gospel, in English) in the war against Hamas to "produce targets at a fast pace".

(Harry Davies, Bethan McKernan and Dan Sabbagh -
The Guardian - 1 Dec 2023)

II. AI and Democracy

i. Elections, Disinformation, and AI: Unraveling the Complex Tapestry of Global Democracy in 2024

The year 2024 is witnessing a collision between a surge in global elections, encompassing at least 83 major democratic exercises, and the pervasive threat of disinformation. With around half of the world's population participating in elections, false narratives, conspiracy theories, and foreign influence campaigns have become a formidable global menace. The convergence of election stress, technological advancements like AI fueling disinformation, and the reduction of social media safeguards pose significant challenges to democracy. The impact is felt across continents, from Europe's parliamentary elections to crucial polls in Taiwan, Pakistan, Indonesia, India, the U.S., Russia, Ukraine, South Africa, and Mexico. The stakes are high, as the struggle to address global challenges has eroded confidence in democratic systems, providing an opportunity for autocratic regimes to exploit political discontent and undermine the world order.

Elections in 2024
• Those elections are spread around the world, including in Europe, where 27 member countries of the European Union will vote in its parliamentary election this June. That amounts to more than four billion people, by some estimates.
• January alone has at least seven elections. Taiwan, which is trying to ward off Chinese disinformation campaigns, votes for a new president on Jan. 13.
• Pakistan and Indonesia — the most populous Muslim countries, which have both fought to balance freedom of speech with efforts to combat disinformation — hold elections a week apart in February.
• In India, where the prime minister has warned about misleading A.I. content, general elections are scheduled for the spring.
• Elections for the European Parliament will take place in June as the European Union continues to put into effect a new law meant to contain corrosive online content.
• A presidential election in Mexico that same month could be affected by a feedback loop of false narratives from elsewhere in the Americas.
• The United States, already in the thick of a presidential race marked by resurgent lies about voting fraud, goes to the polls in November.

ii. How Various Regimes In The World Misusing Ai In For Manipulating Elections

a. The use of AI by autocratic governments:

Disinformation, fueled by false narratives, conspiracy theories, and state-sponsored campaigns, poses a significant threat, amplified by the downsizing of social media safeguards. Autocratic regimes, particularly Russia and China, exploit political discontent, aiming to undermine democratic governance. The convergence of AI advancements further complicates the situation, with the potential for AI tools to both inform and mislead voters, raising concerns about the integrity of the electoral process.

b. State-Sponsored Disinformation: The Menace of Russia, China, and Iran in Global Elections

State-sponsored disinformation campaigns, notably from autocratic governments like Russia, China, and Iran, represent a major challenge to global democracy. These campaigns seek to discredit democratic models and exploit social divisions, with the upcoming U.S. presidential election a prime target. Using AI tools, such as the "Doppelgänger" effort, these campaigns create fake accounts and news outlets, easily transcending borders and spreading disinformation. Conspiracy theories targeting Western political influence are disseminated globally, affecting public opinion in diverse regions. The prevalence of election fraud narratives and their evolution remain key concerns, threatening the democratic process in various countries.

"Concerns about the impact of generative AI on elections have become urgent as we enter a year in which billions of people across the planet will vote. During 2024, it is projected that there will be elections in Taiwan, India, Russia, South Africa, Mexico, Iran, Pakistan, Indonesia, the European Union, the US and the UK. Many of these elections will not determine just the future of nation states: they will also shape how we tackle global challenges such as geopolitical tensions and the climate crisis. It is likely that each of these elections will be influenced by new generative AI technologies in the same way the elections of the 2010s were shaped by social media."

(André Spicer -- The Guardian - 3 Jan 2024)

c. Polarization, Extremism, and AI: Shaping the Political Battlefield of 2024

The political environment in 2024 is marked by escalating polarization and extremism, fueled by hate speech and misinformation. Social media algorithms contribute to echo chambers, amplifying extreme voices while marginalizing moderates. Alternative platforms like Telegram and BitChute facilitate the spread of conspiracy theories, influencing electoral policies and legislation. A risk-reward proposition emerges with AI, presenting opportunities for informed democratic governance but also the potential for widespread disinformation. Concerns arise about the use of AI-generated content to

mislead voters, manipulate election-related information, and erode trust in the democratic process.

d. Tech Giants Retreat: The Erosion of Safeguards in the Face of Global Election Challenges

As the world faces this intricate web of challenges, major tech companies are scaling back protections against disinformation. Meta, YouTube, and other platforms have reshaped or downsized teams responsible for content moderation, and efforts to combat toxic content have waned. Emerging platforms like TikTok and Substack are poised to play larger roles in political content. The industry's reliance on AI-powered content moderation tools raises doubts about the effectiveness of safeguarding democracy. With billions turning to these platforms for information, the potential impact on the integrity of elections is a significant concern, highlighting the need for proactive strategies in ensuring election integrity.

III. AI and Economy

AI-Driven Misinformation Identified as the Most Pressing Short-Term Threat to Global Economy- World Economic Forum 2024

The World Economic Forum (WEF) has identified AI-driven misinformation as the most significant short-term threat to the global economy. In its annual risks report, the WEF highlighted concerns that the spread of false information could disrupt politics, potentially leading to social unrest, riots, and government crackdowns. The report, based on the opinions of 1,400 experts, revealed that 30% of respondents considered there was a high risk of a global catastrophe over the next two years, with two-thirds fearing a disastrous event within the next decade. Elections in countries representing 60% of global GDP, including the UK, US, EU, and India, heightened concerns about the nexus between falsified information and societal unrest during campaigns.

Looking over a 10-year horizon, extreme weather events and climate change were identified as the most pressing risks. The report, produced in collaboration with Zurich Insurance and Marsh McLennan, identified the short-term risks as misinformation and disinformation, extreme weather events, societal polarisation, cyber insecurity, and interstate armed conflict. Carolina Klint, Chief Commercial Officer in Europe for Marsh McLennan, emphasized the disruptive impact of AI breakthroughs on organizations' risk outlooks, with AI magnifying the threat of widespread use of disinformation and misinformation, potentially leading to questioning the legitimacy of elected governments and targeting voters by hostile states and domestic actors. The report emphasized the need for world leaders to address short-term crises and lay the groundwork for a more resilient, sustainable, and inclusive future.

IV. AI and Environment

Artificial intelligence (AI), notably in generative models like ChatGPT, is facing heightened scrutiny due to its considerable environmental impact. The substantial energy consumption in training large language models results in significant carbon emissions, with estimates suggesting that a single early model, such as GPT-2, could generate about 300,000 kg of CO_2 emissions – equivalent to 125 round-trip flights between New York and Beijing. This carbon-intensive footprint is further exacerbated during the inference phase when millions or billions of users interact with the deployed AI models. Despite advancements in AI technology, the ecological consequences of its widespread deployment are often downplayed, requiring a closer examination of the environmental toll associated with the industry's ambitious vision of "AI everywhere."

"AI's voracious appetite for computing power emerges as a major environmental concern. The colossal amounts of electricity required to fuel AI, coupled with the heat generated by powerful graphics processing units (GPUs), result in significant carbon emissions. Despite the industry's reluctance to disclose detailed environmental data, the implications are clear: the dream of "AI everywhere" could lead to a world dependent on a technology with a substantial environmental footprint."

(https://medium.datadriveninvestor.com/why-ai-is-a-disaster-for-the-climate aa90fed53bbb)

Recent research has shed light on the carbon intensity of AI, emphasizing the higher energy and environmental costs associated with generative tasks such as text and image generation. Notably, the inference phase's carbon footprint is a critical aspect, with the environmental impact varying between task-specific and general-purpose models. Surprisingly, training AI models remains significantly more carbon-intensive than the subsequent use of these models for inference, underscoring the importance of considering the entire lifecycle of AI technologies. As the industry envisions pervasive AI usage, understanding and mitigating the environmental implications, backed by concrete statistics and examples, become imperative for sustainable AI development and deployment.

5. SOLUTIONS TO ADDRESS AI'S ANTICIPATED NEGATIVE IMPACTS

"The challenge is clear: to design a new governance framework fit for this unique technology. If global governance of AI is to become possible, the international system must move past traditional conceptions of sovereignty and welcome technology companies to the table. These actors may not derive legitimacy from a social contract, democracy, or the provision of public goods, but without them, effective AI governance will not stand a chance. This is one example of how the international community will need to rethink basic assumptions about the geopolitical order."

(Ian Bremmer and Mustafa Sulayman -Foreign Affairs- Volume 102, Number 5)

Establishing a robust AI governance regime is crucial to address societal risks, ease geopolitical tensions, and set a precedent for governing future disruptive technologies like quantum computing, biotechnology, nanotechnology, and robotics. AI, as a catalyst for change, requires effective governance, not only for the challenges it presents but also as a model for forthcoming technological advancements. Policymakers, facing the formidable force of AI, must expedite the creation of a new governance architecture to navigate the complexities of the twenty-first century.

I. EU Leads the Way in AI Regulation: A Call for Global Cooperation

The European Union's groundbreaking AI laws, set to regulate artificial intelligence and protect public interests, mark a significant departure from the UK's non-binding Bletchley declaration. The EU's legal framework addresses a range of prohibited AI practices, including cognitive behavioral manipulation, untargeted scraping of facial images, and social scoring. While commendable, there are lingering concerns about potential gaps in the EU AI act, particularly regarding liability for developers creating harmful AI tools. Additionally, the act's full enforcement is not expected until 2026, posing a potential risk if the legislation does not keep pace with the rapid advancements in AI technology. As AI is inherently global, other nations are urged to join in this regulatory effort to ensure a comprehensive approach to AI governance and mitigate risks associated with its misuse.

"Europe has made a great leap forward in regulating AI. Now the rest of the world must step up."

(David Evan Harris - The Guardian - 13 Dec 2023)

The EU's legislation on artificial intelligence is a significant leap forward, asserting control over AI development to serve the public interest. The act, addressing prohibited AI practices and regulating high-risk AI systems, demonstrates a commitment to ethical AI governance. However, the effectiveness of this regulatory framework relies on global collaboration, as AI threats transcend borders. Ensuring binding legislation at international forums, such as AI safety summits, becomes crucial to prevent potential loopholes and inconsistencies in AI regulation. The EU's initiative serves as a catalyst for worldwide awareness, urging citizens and governments globally to prioritize education on AI risks and benefits and demand robust, globally coordinated legislation that safeguards society from AI-related harms.

II. Other Solutions:

i. Continuous Monitoring and Adaptation:

Timely update and retrain AI models, staying informed about the latest advancements, and collaborating with the cybersecurity community.

ii. Human Oversight and Ethical Guidelines:

Human oversight is crucial alongside AI contributions. Human experts should track AI systems, fetch outputs, and make critical decisions. Establishing ethical guidelines ensures responsible AI use.
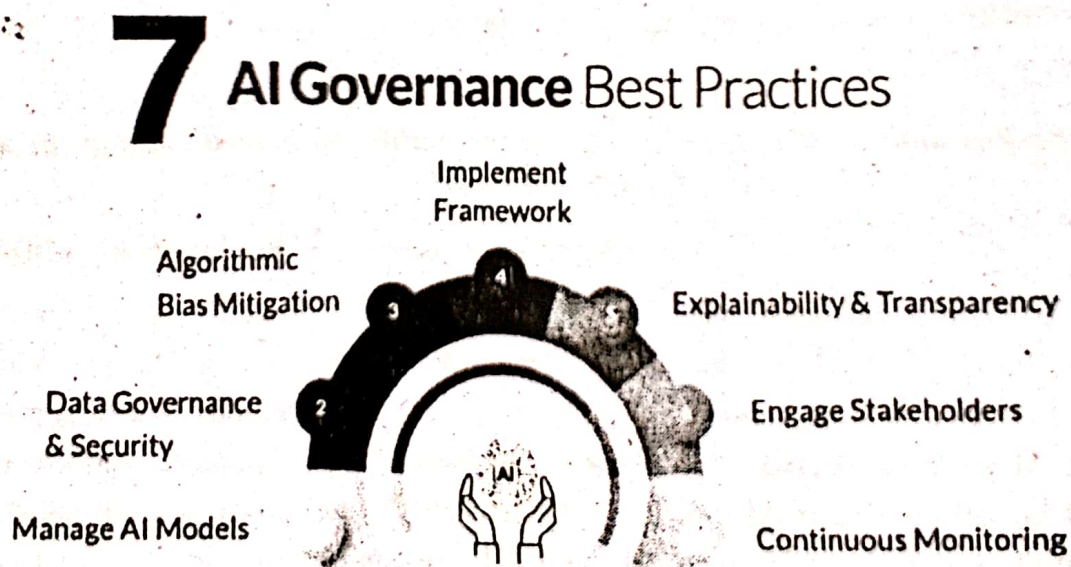
iii. Invest in Bias Research:

Increase investments in multidisciplinary bias research, respecting privacy. Encourage transparency and embed ethics in computer science education.

iv. Establish Responsible Processes:

When deploying AI, implement responsible processes using a mix of technical tools, internal checks, and third-party audits. Recommended practices from tech companies can guide these efforts.

v. Preventing Inequities:

Caution about the potential for AI benefits to further divide society, especially if not everyone can afford the technology.

7 AI Governance Best Practices

Implement Framework

Algorithmic Bias Mitigation

Explainability & Transparency

Data Governance & Security

Engage Stakeholders

Manage AI Models

Continuous Monitoring

6. CONCLUSION:

In a nutshell, the rise of AI presents a transformative wave that permeates various aspects of our global landscape. As AI applications revolutionize education, healthcare, economy, employment, information technology, and governance, they simultaneously introduce a new era characterized by AI nationalism and global competition. The emergence of AI champions, geopolitical dynamics, and diverse approaches to AI development underscore the complexities that nations face in navigating this technological frontier. However, the drawbacks of AI, including its role in digital warfare,

impact on democracy, and implications for the economy and environment, pose significant challenges that demand urgent attention. Recognizing these challenges, global cooperation is essential to regulate AI, with the EU leading the way in advocating for ethical guidelines and responsible processes. Continuous monitoring, human oversight, bias research, and measures to prevent inequities stand out as crucial solutions. As we venture into the AI-driven future, it is imperative to balance the pursuit of innovation with a commitment to ethical considerations, human values, and the preservation of a responsible and inclusive global society.

THE BEST BOOKS FOR UNDERSTANDING THE DYNAMICS OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

a. Human Compatible: Artificial Intelligence and the Problem of Control by Stuart Russell

Russell sees the conflict between humans and machines as inevitable, threatening jobs and human values. However, we can avoid this if we rethink AI from the ground up. While questioning our concepts of human comprehension and machine learning, the writer discusses the possibilities of superhuman AI.

He argues that the biggest challenge in designing IQ is in the software that will require several breakthroughs, one of which needs to be the comprehension of language. According to the author, the possible dangers of autonomous AI systems include lethal autonomous weapons, automated surveillance, fake news behavior manipulation, and automated blackmail, among others. As we adopt AI for real-world applications, we must avoid human enfeeblement. It refers to the time when humans will delegate everything to AI and lose autonomy.

"Alas, the human race is not a single, rational entity. It comprises nasty, envy-driven, irrational, inconsistent, unstable, computationally limited, complex, evolving, and heterogeneous entities."

– Stuart Russell

b. AI Superpowers: China, Silicon Valley, and the New World Order by Kai-Fu Lee:

AI Superpowers: China, Silicon Valley, and the New World Order is a riveting audiobook that shocks listeners with the unexpected consequences of AI development.

Through some interesting, actual AI events, Dr Lee touches upon the fierce competition between the United States and China over AI inventions. The book dwells on the New World Order conspiracy theory and whether some AI innovations are leading to an actual world government.

The author sheds light on the jobs affected and those that artificial intelligence would enhance. Plus, he predicts we're on the verge of an AI economy.

"AI never allows us to understand ourselves truly; it will not be because these algorithms captured the mechanical essence of the human intelligence. It will be because they liberated us to forget about optimizations and to instead focus on what truly makes us human: loving and being loved."

– Kai-Fu Lee

c. Life 3.0: Being Human in the Age of Artificial Intelligence:

Among the Times Books of The Year, Life 3.0: Being Human in the Age of Artificial Intelligence asks whether superhuman intelligence will be our tool or god. The author takes you to the heart of the latest thinking about AI and helps separate myths from realities and utopias from dystopias.

Tegmark explains how automation can help us grow our prosperity without humankind losing purpose or income. He explores ways to ensure that future artificial intelligence systems perform tasks without malfunctioning or getting hacked.

"The alignment problem is the key challenge in building superintelligent AI – how to get a machine to understand what we want and help us achieve it, even if we don't know how to specify that goal ourselves." –

Max Tegmark

d. The Age of AI: And Our Human Future by Henry A Kissinger , Eric Schmidt , Daniel Huttenlocher

Three of the world's most accomplished and deep thinkers come together to explore Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the way it is transforming human society—and what this technology means for us all.

Generative AI is filling the internet with false information. Artists, writers, and many other professionals are in fear of their jobs. AI is discovering new medicines, running military drones, and transforming the world around us—yet we do not understand the decisions it makes, and we don't know how to control them.

In *The Age of AI*, three leading thinkers have come together to consider how AI will change our relationships with knowledge, politics, and the societies in which we live. *The Age of AI* is an essential roadmap to our present and our future, an era unlike any that has come before.

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THE POLITICS OF CLIMATE CHANGE- FROM SHARM-EL-SHEIKH (COP 27) TO DUBAI (COP 28)

Synopsis:

1. **Introduction**
2. **A Brief overview of COP-27**
3. **Key Outcomes of COP27**
4. **COP28: What Was Achieved and What Happens Next?**
5. **Achievements /Developments of COP-28:**
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     - III. Multinational Commitment to Triple Nuclear Energy Production
     - IV. Cargo Owners for Zero Emission Vessels
   - B. **Fixing Climate Finance**
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6. **What Are The Failures Of COP28?**
   - I. Failure to Agree on Phasing Out Fossil Fuels
   - II. Emphasis on Carbon Capture Technology Instead of Fossil Fuel Phase-Out
   - III. Lack of Concrete Actions and Decisions
   - IV. Influence of Fossil Fuel Industry in Leadership
   - V. Potential Impact of External Factors on Political Will
   - VI. Failure to Bridge Gaps and Elevate Climate Ambition
   - VII. Lack of Concrete Commitments and Political Will
7. **The way forward:**
   - I. Set Clear Targets
   - II. Enhance Accountability
   - III. Focus on Immediate Action

THE POLITICS OF CLIMATE CHANGE- FROM SHARM-EL-SHEIKH (COP 27) TO DUBAI (COP 28)

1. INTRODUCTION:

In the nexus of the ongoing global discourse on climate change, the recently concluded 28th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28) in Dubai, hosted by the United Arab Emirates, takes center stage. Against the backdrop of escalating climate emergencies and the imperative for concrete action, the preceding COP27 in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, laid the groundwork by emphasizing the conversion of climate commitments into tangible results. This in-depth exploration navigates through the pivotal outcomes of COP27, spotlighting key initiatives like the Global Stocktake of the Paris Agreement, the Global Goal on Adaptation, and the establishment of the Loss and Damage Fund. Transitioning to COP28 in Dubai, we dissect the conference's achievements, noteworthy developments, and acknowledged shortcomings, shedding light on its broader impact on the global battle against climate change and its specific ramifications for Pakistan. This narrative closely scrutinizes COP28's role in steering the world toward sustainable practices, illuminating the challenges faced and opportunities for transformative change, with a particular focus on Pakistan's strategies for climate resilience.

What is a COP?

The Conference of the Parties (COP) is the main decision-making body of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). It brings together the 198 Parties –197 nations plus the European Union – that have signed on to the Framework Convention.

The inaugural COP gathering took place in Berlin, Germany, in March 1995, and today the COP secretariat is headquartered in Bonn. COPs are hosted annually in different countries, under the auspices of the UNFCCC, with the UAE hosting COP28.

2. A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF COP27

The 27th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP27), held in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, from November 6 to 18, 2022, under the Egyptian Presidency on behalf of the African region, aimed to accelerate climate action in line with the goals of the Paris Agreement. With nearly 35,000 representatives from 198 governments in attendance, the conference extended by 36 hours and concluded on the morning of November 20. The key focus of COP27 was implementation, in contrast to the target-setting emphasis of COP26 in Glasgow. The Sharm El-Sheikh Implementation Plan and other critical decisions were adopted through intense negotiations to operationalize the Paris Agreement.

The context of COP27 was set against a backdrop of escalating climate emergencies, marked by devastating floods, unprecedented heatwaves, severe droughts, and formidable storms. These events underscored the urgent need for action. The conference also addressed the inadequate ambition to curb greenhouse gas emissions, as highlighted by the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The IPCC emphasized the necessity of cutting CO_2 emissions by 45% by 2030, compared to 2010 levels, to meet the Paris Agreement goal of limiting temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius by the end of the century. The conference revealed the shortfall in efforts to limit global temperature rise, despite some progress in bending the curve of greenhouse gas emissions. Additionally, the COP27 President, Sameh Shoukry, emphasized the need to translate ambitious targets and pledges into tangible action, particularly as only 29 countries updated their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) with more ambitious goals from COP26 to COP27. The conference opened with strong appeals to escalate climate action and support, emphasizing the imperative to move from pledges to implementation.

3. KEY OUTCOMES OF COP27

I. Global Stocktake of Paris Agreement:

At COP27, the focus on the Global Stocktake (GST) of the Paris Agreement was pivotal in assessing global progress on climate change mitigation, adaptation, and means of implementation. The UN Climate Change report presented during the conference highlighted the insufficiency of current efforts, revealing that the combined climate pledges of 193 Parties under the Paris Agreement might result in approximately 2.5 °C of warming by the end of the century. The GST, set to repeat every five years, emerged as a critical process to evaluate the collective progress of nations and guide updates to their climate actions.

What has happened since COP began? What is the Kyoto Protocol?

In 1997, at COP3 in Kyoto, Japan, 'developed' countries committed to limit and reduce greenhouse gas emissions – the first legally binding agreement on emissions. Known as the Kyoto Protocol, this entered into force in 2005, with 192 Parities signing up to it and it remains a historic landmark in the fight against climate change.

What is the Global Stocktake?

The Global Stocktake (GST), as outlined in Article 14 of the Paris Agreement, is a systematic process designed for nations and stakeholders to see where they are collectively making progress in achieving the objectives of the Paris Climate Change Agreement – and where they are not. This assessment involves a comprehensive review of all aspects related to global climate action and support, enabling the identification of shortcomings and the collaborative development of solutions, both for the immediate future and beyond 2030.

COP28 is of particular significance as it marks the conclusion of the first GST since the Paris Agreement. Governments will take a decision on the GST at COP28, which can be leveraged to accelerate ambition in their next round of climate action plans due in 2025.

II. Global Goal on Adaptation:

COP27 established a comprehensive two-year Glasgow-Sharm El-Sheikh work programme on the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA). This initiative aimed to capture progress made in 2022 and provide guidance for 2023. The emphasis on adaptation recognizes the urgent need to address the impacts of climate change and develop strategies to protect vulnerable communities. The GGA work programme reflects a commitment to ongoing assessment and improvement in adapting to the changing climate.

III. Loss and Damage Fund (LDF):

One of the notable achievements at COP27 was the establishment of a "loss and damage" fund (LDF) to assist vulnerable countries in meeting the rising costs of climate damage. This fund addresses not only immediate harm from disasters but also considers slower impacts like sea-level rise and loss of cultural heritage. Despite positive steps, there was criticism about the slow progress in reducing emissions, emphasizing the missed opportunity to take decisive action.

IV. Safeguarding Food Security:

COP27 recognized the fundamental priority of safeguarding food security and ending hunger, marking progress from the previous Glasgow Climate Pact that made no mention of agriculture, food, or water. The decision acknowledged that communities can better protect themselves from climate effects if water systems are conserved. However, the absence of dedicated funding for food systems from governments and the lack of reference to the significant role of food systems in global emissions raised concerns.

V. Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture (KJWA):

The KJWA at COP27 addressed issues related to agriculture's vulnerability to climate change. Through workshops and expert meetings, negotiations focused on considering the next phase of KJWA, aiming to promote sustainable agriculture with a view to eradicating hunger and poverty while ensuring food security.

VI. Mitigation Work Programme (MWP):

MWP, mandated by the Glasgow Climate Pact, aimed to explore ways to raise mitigation ambition before 2030. Discussions centered on identifying new categories of countries, setting end dates, and aligning with temperature goals in the Paris Agreement. The final decision emphasized the urgent need for increased efforts to reduce emissions collectively.

VII. Phase Down Coal Use:

While COP27 emphasized the need for rapid emissions reductions by 2030, specific measures for phasing down coal use were not included in the final cover decision. The section on energy had also been weakened, with calls to phase out fossil fuels being blocked by oil-producing states.

VIII. Long-Term Climate Finance:

The COP27 process aimed to advance the mobilization of climate finance resources from various sources. It recognized the unmet goal of USD 100 billion annually by 2020 and addressed the lack of a common definition and accounting methodology to assess progress towards this goal.

IX. New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance:

Discussions on a new collective quantified goal on climate finance continued at COP27. Developing countries sought trillions, emphasizing the need for significant financial support, while debates surrounded the role of the private sector and an expanded group of donor countries.

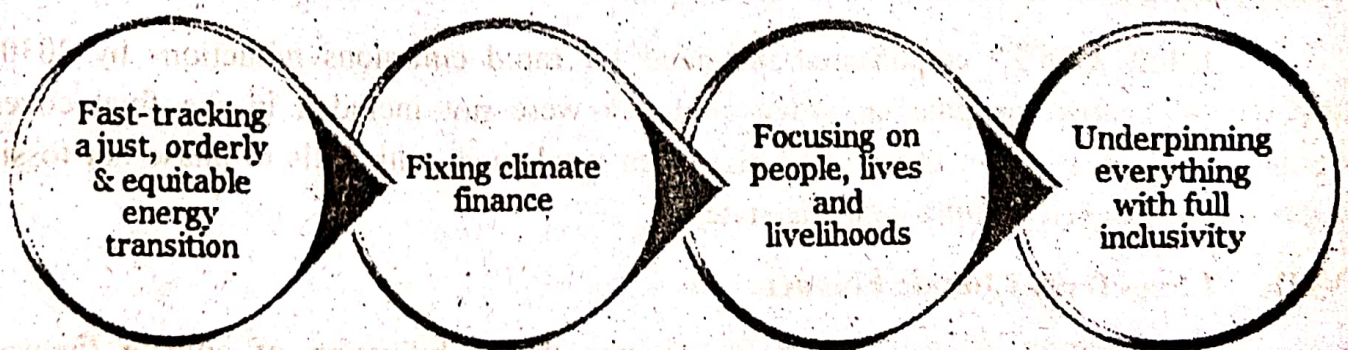## X. Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE):

ACE, focusing on education, training, public awareness, and participation, adopted a four-year action plan under the Glasgow work programme. This plan aimed to empower all members of society in climate action through short-term, clear, and time-bound activities.

XI. Gender and Climate Change:

An intermediate review of the gender action plan's implementation occurred at COP27. The conference emphasized support for gender-related activities and urged parties to accelerate efforts to advance the Lima Work Programme on Gender. The decision underscored the need for gender-responsive climate policies, inclusivity, and improved climate finance gender responsiveness.

4. COP28: WHAT WAS ACHIEVED AND WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

COP28, held in Dubai, marked a pivotal moment in global climate efforts with its unprecedented scale, boasting 85,000 participants, including over 150 Heads of State and Government. The conference concluded the first 'global stocktake' under the Paris Agreement, revealing the sluggish progress in addressing climate change. In response, COP28 delegates made a significant decision to accelerate action by 2030, urging governments to expedite the shift from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources in their upcoming climate commitments. This decision underscores a shared commitment to sustainable energy and represents a crucial step in combating the climate emergency.

Fast-tracking a just, orderly & equitable energy transition → Fixing climate finance → Focusing on people, lives and livelihoods → Underpinning everything with full inclusivity

4 PILLARS OF COP-28

The conference's key highlights include its role as a catalyst for collective action, emphasizing the urgency of addressing climate-related challenges. The outcomes signify

a call for transformative changes in policies, technologies, and practices to build a more sustainable and resilient future. Looking ahead, challenges lie in ensuring the swift and substantial implementation of COP28 decisions, with a focus on holding nations accountable for their commitments. Simultaneously, opportunities arise in continued collaboration and innovation, as the momentum generated at COP28 lays the foundation for sustained efforts and partnerships across nations, civil society, and businesses. The coming years, particularly in 2024 and beyond, demand a collective commitment to translating the ambitious goals set at COP28 into tangible actions for meaningful progress in the global fight against climate change.

Major COP Outcomes Explained

- Transition Away From Fossil-Fuel-Nearly 200 countries agreed to "transition away from fossil fuels in energy systems" at the COP28. The agreement is the first time countries have made this pledge.

- Global Renewables and Energy Efficiency Pledge-Signatory countries to work together to triple the world's installed renewable energy generation capacity to at least 11,000 GW by 2030. The countries must collectively double the global average annual rate of energy efficiency improvements from around 2% to over 4% every year until 2030.

- Loss and Damage Fund- Operationalization of the Loss and Damage (L&D) fund aimed at compensating countries grappling with climate change impacts. Commitments worth about USS 800 million had been made to the Fund. The World Bank will be the "interim host" of the fund for four years.

- Global Goal on Adaptation- The draft text on the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) was introduced at COP 28. It aims to enhance climate change adaptation by increasing awareness and funding towards countries' adaptation needs in the context of the 1.5/2°C goal of the Paris Agreement

- The Global Cooling Pledge-66 national government signatories committed to working together to reduce cooling- related emissions across all sectors by at least 68% globally relative to 2022 levels by 2050.

- Declaration to Triple Nuclear Energy- The declaration launched at COP28 aims to triple global nuclear energy capacity by 2050. It was endorsed by 22 National Governments.

- Coal Transition Accelerator-France, in collaboration with various countries and organizations, introduced the Coal Transition Accelerator. The initiative aims to leverage best practices and lessons learned for effective coal transition policies.

- CHAMP Initiative-Coalition for High Ambition Multilevel Partnership.(CHAMP) for Climate Action was launched at

- COP 28. This initiative aims at efficient planning, financing, Implementation, and monitoring of climate strategies

- Climate Finance- Under the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) for climate finance, wealthy nations owe developing countries USD 500 billion in 2025.

5. ACHIEVEMENTS /DEVELOPMENTS OF COP-28

A. Fast-tracking a just, orderly, and equitable energy transition

A rapid decarbonization of the energy system is the key to keeping the goal of 1.5°C within reach. This requires accelerating clean energy transition both from the demand and supply side, while such transformation should be orderly, just and equitable and also account for energy security.

I. Global Renewables and Energy Efficiency Pledge: To accelerate the energy transition, the COP 28 Presidency took a leading role in launching the Global Renewables and Energy Efficiency Pledge. With the endorsement of 130 national governments (as of 11 December, including the European Union (EU)), the Pledge stipulates *that signatories commit to work together to triple the world's installed renewable energy generation capacity to at least 11,000 GW by 2030 and to collectively double the global average annual rate of energy efficiency improvements from around two per cent to over four per cent every year until 2030.*

II. Oil and Gas Decarbonization Charter: The 52 signatories of the Oil and Gas Decarbonization Charter commit to net-zero operations by 2050 at the latest and ending routine flaring by 2030 and near-zero upstream methane emissions

"The United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28) closed today with an agreement that signals the "beginning of the end" of the fossil fuel era by laying the ground for a swift, just and equitable transition, underpinned by deep emissions cuts and scaled-up finance." (UNFCC - 13 December 2023)

III. Multinational Commitment to Triple Nuclear Energy Production: U.S. climate envoy John Kerry unveiled a 22-nation multilateral commitment to triple global nuclear energy production by 2050 at COP28 in Dubai. It raises a goal of tripling nuclear energy capacity globally by 2050 and inviting shareholders of international financial institutions to encourage the inclusion of nuclear energy in energy lending policies, was endorsed by 22 national governments.

Global Cooling Pledge

Global Decarbonization Accelerator(GDA)

Global Renewables and Energy Efficiency Pledge

UAE Hydrogen Declaration of Intent

Oil and Gas Decarbonization Charter (OGDC)

Industrial Transition Accelerator (ITA)

IV. **Cargo Owners for Zero Emission Vessels:** Announcements focused on shipping include **10 companies joining the Cargo Owners for Zero Emission Vessels,** the collaborative platform announced during COP 28, bringing the total to over 35 freight buyers working to drive ambition and action toward zero-emissions ocean transport.

B. Fixing Climate Finance

Throughout COP 28, a number of national governments and organizations announced commitments to climate finance to areas including but not limited to the Green Climate Fund, Adaptation Fund, Least Developed Countries Fund, and Special Climate Change Fund.

i. **Declaration on a Global Climate Finance Framework:** Finance Framework. The Framework will work to unlock the investment opportunity of climate finance through collective action, opportunity for all. and delivering at scale. It is also planned to report back against the delivery of this framework immediately following COP 28.

ii. **The Global Capacity Building Coalition:** Supported by Bloomberg Philanthropiesand with the engagement of organizations including the UN, World Bank and other multilateral development banks, International Monetary Fund, International Sustainability Standards Board.

## C. UAE Declaration on Climate Relief, Recovery and Peace

To strengthen collective action to build climate resilience at the scale and speed required in highly vulnerable countries and communities, under the leadership of the COP 28 Presidency, *78 national governments (including the EU) and 40 organizations endorsed the COP 28 UAE Declaration on Climate Relief, Recovery and Peace.* Signatories commit to enhancing financial support for climate adaptation and resilience, understanding and improving good practice and programming, and strengthening coordination, collaboration, and partnerships.

D) UAE Declaration on Climate and Health

Presidency convened the **first-ever health day** to strengthen the interconnections between health and climate in the action agenda, which is a key part of people-focused resilience building. A total of 141 national governments joined the COP 28 UAE Declaration on Climate and Health (including the EU), which commits to the advancement of climate-resilient development, the strengthening of health systems, and the building of resilient and thriving communities, for the benefit of present and future generations.

E) **UAE Declaration on Sustainable Agriculture, Resilient Food Systems, and Climate Action**

Also, building a resilient food system that adapts to climate change impacts is vital for people to secure their livelihoods. In this regard, the COP 28 Presidency also launched the UAE Declaration on Sustainable Agriculture, Resilient Food Systems, and Climate Action. The 153 national government (including the EU)signatories commit to several actions, including scaling up adaptation and resilience to reduce the vulnerability of all farmers, fisherfolk, and other food producers to the impacts of climate change, and promoting food security and nutrition by increasing efforts to support vulnerable people.
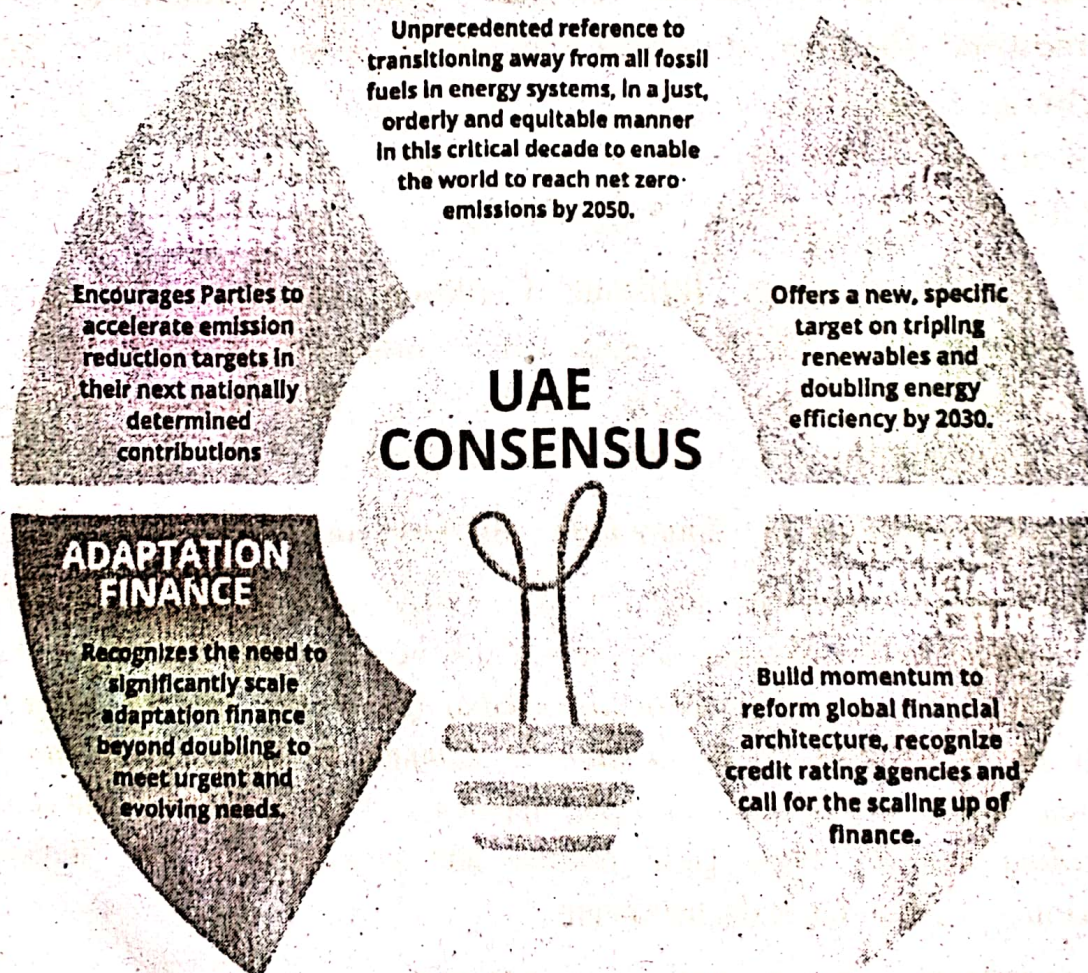
With the aim of eliminating hunger and all forms of malnutrition without exceeding the temperature rise of 1.5°C, the global roadmap presented by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) identifies 120 actions and key milestones within ten domains, supported by evidence gathered by FAO over several years. Forestry is also a key area of climate change closely linked to livelihood. At COP 28, countries and organizations celebrated the 10th anniversary of the Warsaw Framework for REDD+, with a status update of 60 developing countries actively implementing REDD+ activities.

F) Underpinning Everything With Full Inclusivity

Climate change impacts communities and societies, particularly vulnerable communities and underrepresented groups. As such, ensuring representation of all voices around the world is key to the process held under the values of the UN. In this regard, prior to COP 28, the COP 28 Presidency and the Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC announced a joint statement committing to work together to make COP 28 the most inclusive UN Climate Change Conference to date.

i) **The appointment of the Youth Climate Champion:** Another early action by the COP 28 Presidency is the appointment of the Youth Climate Champion.

ii) **COP 28 Gender-Responsive Just Transitions and Climate Action Partnership:**

Gender equity is also a key part of inclusivity. The COP 28 Presidency and the COP 28 High Level Champion took a leading role in launching the COP 28 Gender-Responsive Just Transitions and Climate Action Partnership. *The 78 national governments that signed the Partnership commit to working collaboratively to support just and inclusive transitions that advance gender equality and the goals of the enhanced Lima Work Program on Gender and its Gender Action Plan and to reconvene for dialogue at COP 32 to report on the implementation of the commitments of the Partnership.*

6. WHAT ARE THE FAILURES OF COP28?

COP28 a "monument of schizophrenia" full of talk and no action.

Jean-Pascal , a former vice-chair of the IPCC

1. Failure to Agree on Phasing Out Fossil Fuels:

UN Chief António Guterres denounced the net-zero charter presented by Jaber, the head of this year's conference, stating,

"It says nothing about eliminating emissions from fossil fuel consumption."

"Science is clear: we need to phase out fossil fuels within a timeframe compatible with limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius," the UN chief emphasised

COP28 leaders failed to reach a consensus on the crucial matter of phasing out fossil fuels, a key element in achieving the global goal of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

2. Emphasis on Carbon Capture Technology Instead of Fossil Fuel Phase-Out:

Rather than committing to the phase-out of fossil fuels, oil-dependent countries, including the UAE as the COP28 host, argued for the development of technology like carbon capture and storage (CCS) as an alternative solution. Critics argue that CCS is in

its early stages and has not proven commercially viable at scale, raising concerns about its effectiveness in addressing the climate crisis.

3. Lack of Concrete Actions and Decisions:

COP28, according to Jean-Pascal van Ypersele, was criticized for being a "monument of schizophrenia," with a text that acknowledged risks without sufficient concrete decisions to address them. The COP28 summit was seen as heavy on rhetoric and discussions but light on tangible actions, with only a few references to specific decisions.

"COP28 needs less talk and more action. The opportunity to avoid irreversible climate damage is slipping away. What matters now is not more commitments and pledges, but real engagement." (By The Editorial Board -Bloomberg -December 5, 2023)

4. Influence of Fossil Fuel Industry in Leadership:

"It's like allowing weapons manufacturers to dominate a peace conference,
Climate activist Al Gore

The appointment of Sultan al Jaber, the CEO of ADNOC (UAE's petroleum giant), as the president of COP28 raised concerns about a cozy relationship with the fossil fuel industry. Critics argue that such appointments may hinder the impartiality of COP leadership, potentially allowing vested interests to dominate the summit's agenda.

5. Potential Impact of External Factors on Political Will:

The economic damage caused by the pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and high inflation collectively weakened political will to address climate change at COP28.

6. Failure to Bridge Gaps and Elevate Climate Ambition:

Negotiators at COP28 need to address significant gaps, including elevating the ambition for bolder climate action, accelerating the energy transition, and establishing a robust framework for adaptation. However, the summit faces challenges such as the lack of political will and substantial influence from fossil fuel delegates.

7. Lack of Concrete Commitments and Political Will:

COP28 is criticized for its lack of political will and the absence of concrete commitments to address the climate crisis effectively.

Dr. Ashok Swain, Professor of Peace and Conflict at Uppsala University, Sweden, remarked:

"The world is well aware of the necessary actions needed to address the climate crisis. The challenge lies in the lack of political will to enact these measures and avert the impending crisis."

7. THE WAY FORWARD:

i. **Set Clear Targets:**

Establish specific, enforceable targets and timelines for transitioning away from fossil fuels. **Ex:** The European Union's 2020 climate and energy package.

ii. **Enhance Accountability:**

Implement mechanisms for tracking and reporting progress on commitments, especially for renewable energy and energy efficiency goals.

iii. **Focus on Immediate Action:**

Prioritize actions that can yield immediate and significant impacts on emission reductions.**Ex:** Denmark's rapid shift to wind energy.

iv. **Global Collaboration:**

Foster stronger international collaboration, especially in technology transfer and financial support for developing countries.**Ex:** International Solar alliance

v. **Inclusive Policies:**

Develop policies that address the concerns of all countries, particularly those most affected by climate change and those heavily reliant on fossil fuels.

8. COP-28 AND PAKISTAN

COP-28, concluding in Dubai, played a crucial role in addressing climate change, drawing representatives from nearly 200 countries, including Pakistan. Notably, the establishment of the Loss and Damage Fund marked a positive start, echoing Pakistan's efforts at COP27 to lobby for such a fund. Despite vulnerability to climate change and being a minor contributor to emissions, Pakistan faces challenges in accessing the funding due to stringent checks and balances.

Pakistan, ranked 5th among the countries most affected by climate change according to the Global Climate Risk Index 2022, faces significant environmental challenges. Extreme weather conditions such as heatwaves. floods, droughts, and smog have adversely affected the country's economy, agriculture, and health sector. The economic losses due to climate change are projected to be substantial, estimated at 9-14% of GDP by 2050 by the Asian Development Bank. To combat these challenges, Pakistan has initiated various projects to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, promote renewable energy sources, and increase forest cover. The country has set an ambitious target of generating 60% of its electricity from renewable sources by 2030, and initiatives like the Billion Tree Tsunami project demonstrate a commitment to sustainable practices.

A recent memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed between the UAE's Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure and the Government of Pakistan during a visit by Dr. Sultan Al Jaber, President-designate of COP 28, outlines a roadmap for investing in

renewable energy projects. This partnership is a crucial step towards a just energy transition and scaling up renewables in Pakistan, not only reducing greenhouse gas emissions but also creating job opportunities in the renewable energy sector. Additionally, Pakistan's participation in COP-28 provides a platform to secure funding for climate adaptation and mitigation projects. The Green Climate Fund (GCF), established under UNFCCC, has already allocated $50 million to Pakistan for its climate projects, and further participation in COP-28 can potentially lead to additional funding for the country's endeavors in addressing climate change. In conclusion, COP-28 is a pivotal conference for addressing climate change, and Pakistan's active involvement is essential for advocating its interests, learning from global experiences, and securing support for its climate initiatives.

9. PAKISTAN'S ROLE IN IDENTIFYING KEY ISSUES DURING COP 28:

i. Climate Finance:

Pakistan actively engaged in discussions related to climate finance during COP 28. This involves the allocation and mobilization of financial resources to support climate-related projects and initiatives, particularly in developing countries. Pakistan highlighted the pressing issue of a significant gap between the financial commitments made by developed nations and the actual financial needs of developing countries to effectively combat climate change. This gap is critical because it directly impacts the capacity of countries, especially those with limited resources like Pakistan, to implement climate action plans and strategies effectively. Pakistan's advocacy for equitable and adequate climate finance is crucial for enabling climate-resilient development in vulnerable regions.

ii. Adaptation:

Pakistan played a central role in developing a framework for the Global Goal on Adaptation during COP 28. Adaptation refers to measures taken to minimize the adverse impacts of climate change on communities, ecosystems, and infrastructure. The framework aims to guide countries in responding to the immediate and long-term challenges posed by climate change, especially in vulnerable regions. Pakistan's involvement in this initiative demonstrates its commitment to addressing the real-world impacts of climate change on its population and environment.

iii. Loss and Damage:

Another significant issue that Pakistan championed during COP 28 was the establishment of a fund to address losses and damages caused by climate change. Loss and damage refer to the irreversible consequences and financial burdens experienced by countries due to the impacts of climate change, including extreme weather events. Pakistan's advocacy for this fund is critical because it acknowledges the disproportionate

burden placed on vulnerable countries that are often least responsible for greenhouse gas emissions but suffer the most from climate-related disasters. The fund provides a mechanism for supporting countries in recovering from and adapting to such damages.

iv. Mitigation:

Pakistan actively participated in discussions related to scaling up mitigation efforts during COP 28. Mitigation involves reducing greenhouse gas emissions and transitioning to cleaner and more sustainable energy sources. This is a key component of limiting global temperature rise and preventing the most severe impacts of climate change. Pakistan's involvement in these discussions reflects its commitment to reducing its own carbon emissions and contributing to the global effort to combat climate change.

10. CLIMATE RESILIENCE STRATEGIES FOR PAKISTAN

- Adopt a pro-people and pro-climate approach for effective climate emergency preparedness.
- Utilize existing resources efficiently to address climate challenges and reduce environmental impact.
- Invest in hybrid public transit infrastructure to decrease reliance on imported fuel and cut emissions.
- Foster economic growth through initiatives that make the nation more climate-resilient.
- Overhaul public sector projects to minimize emissions and improve overall efficiency.
- Implement structural changes in resource allocation and spending for climate-friendly interventions.
- Consider potential debt restructuring and explore climate-linked financial instruments for financing.
- Address structural deficits to avoid exacerbating Pakistan's fragile debt position.
- Mitigate the impacts of climate change to protect vulnerable households and ensure sustainability.

11. CONCLUSION:

In s nutshell, the 28th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28) held in Dubai stands as a watershed moment, both in terms of global collaboration and the challenges that persist in addressing climate change. With an unprecedented scale, COP28 witnessed substantial achievements, such as the Global Renewables and Energy Efficiency Pledge, the Oil and Gas Decarbonization Charter, and the commitment to triple nuclear energy production. The establishment of crucial frameworks like the Loss and Damage Fund and the Global Goal on Adaptation demonstrates a collective commitment to addressing the real-world impacts of climate change. However, amid

these successes, COP28 faced criticism for its failure to reach a consensus on phasing out fossil fuels, reliance on carbon capture technology, and the influence of the fossil fuel industry in leadership. The summit's emphasis on talk over concrete actions and the potential impact of external factors on political will pose challenges for the immediate future. Moving forward, the international community must build on the momentum generated at COP28, fostering real, enforceable commitments to ensure a sustainable and resilient future for our planet. The road ahead demands not just rhetoric but tangible, immediate actions to safeguard the world from irreversible climate damage.

THE MEMBERSHIP OF IRAN IN SCO: NAVIGATING NEW HORIZONS IN EURASIAN GEOPOLITICS
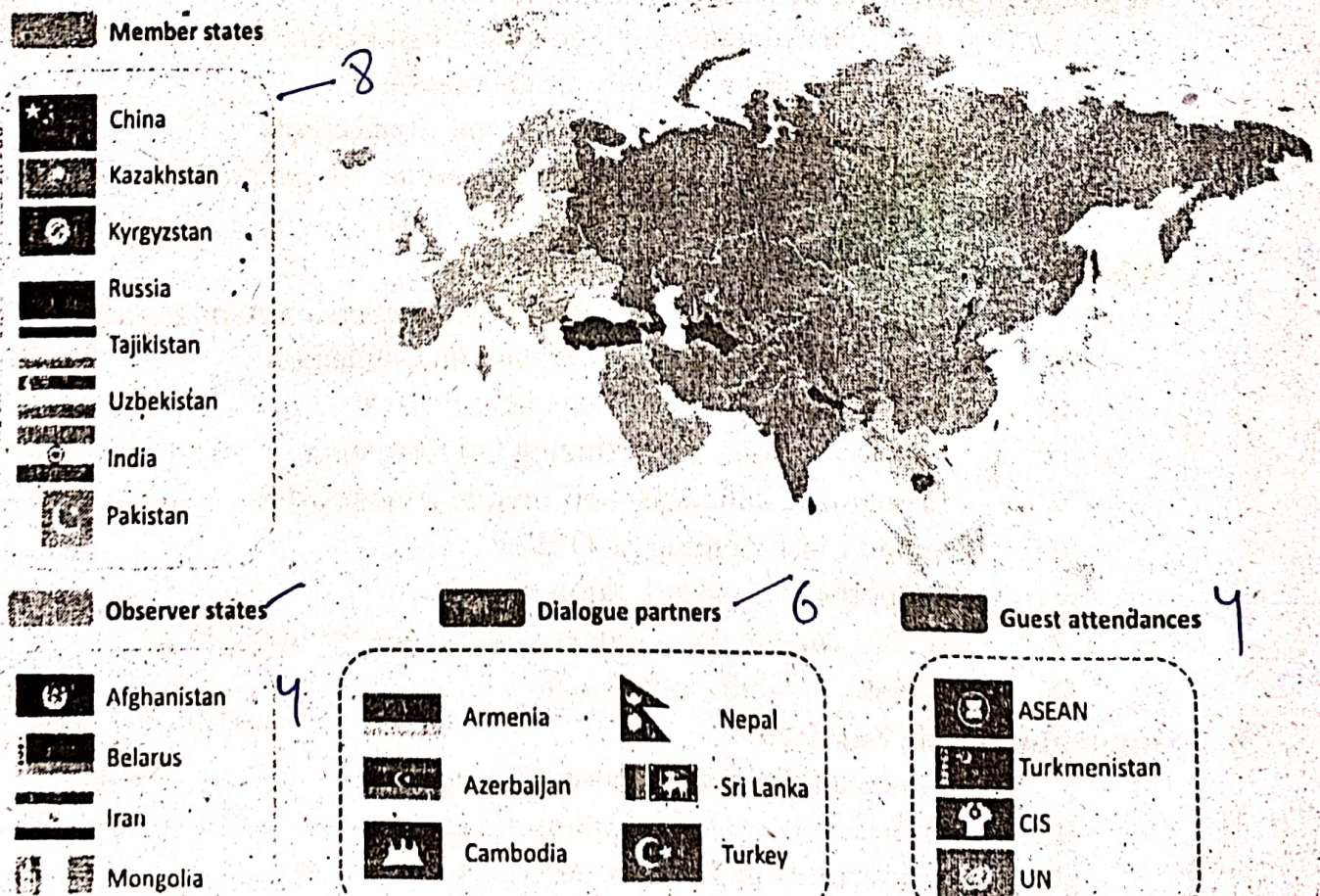
Synopsis:

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THE MEMBERSHIP OF IRAN IN SCO: NAVIGATING NEW HORIZONS IN EURASIAN GEOPOLITICS

1. INTRODUCTION:

Iran's recent accession, as the ninth permanent member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) marks a transformative moment in Eurasian geopolitics. The SCO, established in 2001, stands as a key regional entity, focusing on security, economic cooperation, and political dialogue. Iran's historical progression within the SCO, and its current inclusion in the group encompasses diplomatic achievements as well as regional implications. The implications for Iran include addressing its geostrategic importance, collaborations in security, involvement in the Belt and Road Initiative, and economic implications. However, it is early to suggest a tremendous impact on the global arena as there are still significant hurdles in realizing the true potential of this organization.

SCO MEMBERS

Member states

China
Kazakhstan
Kyrgyzstan
Russia
Tajikistan
Uzbekistan
India
Pakistan

Observer states

Afghanistan
Belarus
Iran
Mongolia

Dialogue partners

Armenia
Azerbaijan
Cambodia
Nepal
Sri Lanka
Turkey

Guest attendances

ASEAN
Turkmenistan
CIS
UN

2. A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF SCO:

I. Establishment and Membership:

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) was founded in Shanghai on June 15, 2001, as an intergovernmental organization. The current membership includes:

9 Member States — the Republic of India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the People's Republic of China, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Tajikistan, the Republic of Uzbekistan;

3 Observer states - the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Republic of Belarus, Mongolia. In 2022, at the Samarkand SCO Summit, the process of raising the status of the Republic of Belarus within the Organization to the level of a member state has begun;

14 Dialogue Partners – the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Republic of Armenia, the Kingdom of Bahrain, the Arab Republic of Egypt, the Kingdom of Cambodia, the State of Qatar, the State of Kuwait, the Republic of Maldives, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, the United Arab Emirates, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Republic of Turkey, the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.

II. Focus and Priorities: -

Since its inception, the SCO has primarily concentrated on addressing regional security concerns, combating terrorism, ethnic separatism, and religious extremism. Over time, its priorities have expanded to include regional development as a key focus area.

As per the official website of SCO, the goals of the organization are: to strengthen mutual trust, friendship and good-neighborliness between the Member States;

➤ to encourage the effective cooperation between the Member States in such spheres as politics, trade, economy, science and technology, culture, education, energy, transport, tourism, environmental protection, etc;

➤ to jointly ensure and maintain peace, security and stability in the region; and

➤ to promote a new democratic, fair and rational international political and economic international order.

III. International Engagement:→

The SCO has held Observer status at the UN General Assembly since 2005. In April 2010, a Joint Declaration on Cooperation was signed between the UN and SCO Secretariats. The SCO Secretariat has established partnerships with international organizations such as UNESCO, UNWTO, and IOM. Ongoing collaborations also exist with UNODC, ESCAP, and UNOCT.

IV. Cooperation with UN Entities: ⌐

The Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) and UNRCCA maintain regular contacts with SCO officials. These interactions center around security developments in the region and crucial issues related to counterterrorism and the prevention of violent extremism.

3. IRAN'S INCLUSION IN THE SCO: ⟶

I. Historical Progression:

Iran's journey towards SCO membership began with obtaining observer status in June 2005, followed by a formal application for full membership in 2008. The approval for permanent membership was granted during the 21st Summit in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, in September 2021.

II. Iran's Official Entry into SCO:

Iran has officially become the ninth permanent member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), confirmed by Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian. This milestone was announced at the 23rd Summit of the SCO Council of Heads of State, held virtually on July 4, 2023 and hosted by India. The move solidifies Iran's position as a key player in this Eurasian political, economic, and security organization.

III. Diplomatic Achievement and Future Intentions:

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), a significant forum in the Eurasian region, emerged as a pivotal player in Iran's diplomatic endeavors. Becoming an observer member in the SCO and later achieving permanent membership in 2021 marked a crucial turning point for Iran. This transition was driven by Tehran's diplomatic efforts to secure political support from member states, particularly fostering bilateral ties with Russia and China. The SCO, known for its focus on strategic cooperation in security, economy, and border issues, presented Iran with an alternative platform to navigate the challenges posed by U.S. economic sanctions. The move towards SCO membership aligns with Iran's broader objectives, including economic and strategic gains, countering the impact of U.S. sanctions, and maintaining its position in the Middle East. Iran's desire for permanent SCO membership reflects its commitment to engaging emerging powers and reshaping its future strategies in the dynamic geopolitical landscape of the region. As Iran faces challenges related to its image, nuclear issues, and relations with Arab states, the SCO platform provides an avenue for addressing and potentially ameliorating these concerns.

4. REGIONAL SIGNIFICANCE OF IRAN'S INCLUSION IN SCO

With Iran's inclusion, the SCO now represents 40% of the global population and possesses approximately 20% of the world's oil reserves. For Iran, joining the SCO signifies a crucial milestone with the potential for increased economic, commercial, and strategic opportunities. It aligns with Tehran's Look East Policy, aiming to enhance ties with Asian neighbors, particularly Russia, China, and India, amid global sanctions and domestic economic challenges.

I. Iran's Geostrategic and Economic Significance:

Iran's inclusion enhances the SCO's influence in West Asia, leveraging Iran's substantial oil and gas reserves to meet the energy needs of member countries. For Iran, this represents a significant economic opportunity, fostering increased trade, strategic partnerships, and connectivity. The move aligns with Iran's Look East Policy, emphasizing improved ties with Asian neighbors, especially Russia, China, and India.

II. Security and Intelligence Collaboration:

Collaboration within the SCO is expected to strengthen in areas of security and intelligence exchange, promoting stability and combating extremism and terrorism. Iran's strategic location and diverse industries make it a valuable participant in these collaborative efforts. The potential for enhanced defense cooperation, including arms supplies, particularly with China, is underscored by Iran's growing trade and cooperation with SCO members.

III. Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and Connectivity:

Iran's SCO membership aligns it more closely with China and Russia, providing opportunities for enhanced regional connectivity through initiatives like the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC). Iran's strategic location and vast energy resources make it crucial for BRI projects, facilitating enhanced regional connectivity and providing a gateway for SCO's influence in West Asia.

IV. Use of Local Currencies and Economic Cooperation:

The SCO actively promotes the use of local currencies in trade among member countries, reducing dependence on the US dollar. Bilateral trade promotion, joint financial institutions, and support for multilateral development banks enhance economic ties and reduce reliance on external currencies.

V. SCO's Expanding Influence in West Asia:

Apart from Iran, there is a growing trend among Arab countries to join the SCO, with Qatar, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, and the UAE seeking various forms of engagement. The SCO's involvement in trade and investment presents appealing prospects for investments and partnerships, especially in sectors like technology, artificial intelligence, seaports, power, agriculture, and green energy.

5. WHAT DOES THE SCO MEMBERSHIP MEAN FOR IRAN?

The Islamic Republic of Iran has navigated a challenging phase of economic sanctions, grappling with the aftermath of the Iraq war and subsequent sanctions that led to economic depression and social disorder. Despite these adversities, Iran has actively sought regional support and affiliations, strategically engaging with powers like Russia and China. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), a significant forum in the Eurasian region, emerged as a pivotal player in Iran's diplomatic endeavors.

"The inclusion of Iran in the SCO gives the message of regional integrity and symbolizes the beginning of a new era of regionalism. Despite ongoing regional crises, the SCO summit in Samarkand reaffirmed its values and principles of shared destiny and win-win cooperation for the region."

(Aamna Khan - https://thediplomat.com)

I. Iran's Strategic Position and SCO Membership Aspirations

Iran, strategically located with abundant oil resources, has sought new directions amidst economic and humanitarian crises fueled by sanctions. The country's request for permanent membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), reflects its intent to address economic challenges and leverage its significant position connecting the Middle East, Central Asia, and Southwest Asia.

"Iran is gradually emerging from diplomatic isolation, forging a key military alliance with Russia from which it's seeking air defenses, restoring diplomatic ties with Saudi Arabia and pushing its allies to fire missiles at Israel. It is also enriching more and more uranium, including a small amount almost to weapons grade — while denying any plans for making a bomb...... Its membership of the Chinese-founded SCO — a regional security grouping — is further indication that countries are willing to engage with it."

(Sudhi Ranjan Sen -Bloomberg -July 4, 2023)

II. Strategic Importance and Economic Challenges

Achieving permanent status in 2021 positions Iran to utilize the SCO as a bridge to landlocked Central Asian states, opening avenues for economic cooperation and connectivity to Europe. The impact of U.S. conflicts and sanctions has left deep imprints on Iran's economy, prompting Tehran to expand ties with the SCO bloc for regional support and to serve as a corridor for emerging world powers. Amid the continued U.S.-Iran conflict, Iran is keen on utilizing its strategic location for the upliftment of its economy and seeks to leverage its SCO membership to counter the effects of sanctions.

"Joining the SCO is a success for Iran on both the economic as well as the political front. Since 2018, when then-U.S. President Donald Trump pulled out of Tehran's nuclear agreement with major powers including Russia and China, the Iranian economy has. suffered critically. Therefore, inclusion in the SCO will open up new avenues for trade and cooperation with neighboring states that in return help Iran to solve its economic challenges."

(Aamna Khan - https://thediplomat.com)

III. SCO Membership and Economic Revival

Iran's engagement with the SCO is driven by the need for economic projects and plans, with a focus on infrastructure development, connectivity, and multi-regional cooperation. Joining the SCO as a permanent member aligns with Iran's economic goals, as it seeks outer cooperation to uplift trade and economy, counter the negative impacts of sanctions, and revive its stagnant economy. The SCO provides Iran with an opportunity

to engage in talks and mutual ties, positioning itself as a favored state among member countries.

'Iran has traditionally looked west toward Europe for trade and investment partners. Increasingly though, it has grown frustrated with European countries that opposed former President Donald Trump's policy of "maximum pressure" on Iran but quietly withdrew from the kinds of deals that the 2015 nuclear agreement once promised... Both Ibrahim Raisi and Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei have repeatedly stressed that the country must "look to the East" not only to resist its economic isolation from the West, but also to find strategic allies that would help it reach a new agreement on the nuclear program, address the banking and trade problems U.S. sanctions have imposed on Iran, and strengthen its role in the Middle East and Asia."

(Nazila Fathi - The Middle East Institute (MEI))

IV. Economic Gains and Utilizing Oil Resources

For Iran, economic gains are paramount, and the SCO membership serves as a platform to enhance regional connectivity and trade, particularly given its strategic Chahbhar sea port and business opportunities. The state's aim to use its oil resources to win the world market is crucial, considering the losses incurred due to the U.S.-imposed restrictions on Iranian oil exports. In essence, Iran's SCO membership signifies a strategic move to overcome economic challenges, build regional partnerships, and reshape its position in the global economic landscape.

"Iran could be seeking access to the Central Asian region, which can be regarded as a market for exports of Iranian goods. The SCO includes both the largest fuel producers and the largest buyers of hydrocarbons."

(Nazila Fathi - The Middle East Institute (MEI))

V. Economic Challenges and Unemployment Crisis

The weak economy, rising inflation, and a dearth of job opportunities in Iran are exacerbated over time. IMF projections indicate that, if U.S. sanctions persist, approximately 13% of the total population could be unemployed by 2021, posing significant challenges for a country with substantial oil production. Iran's fiscal cycle has remained in a negative loop for years, hindering economic stability and growth. The low currency rate further compounds the challenges faced by the common people, prompting Iran to seek new opportunities and alliances in the region, with the SCO emerging as a potential platform for economic revitalization.

VI. Support of Emerging SCO Bloc

Iran recognizes the significance of warm relations with regional powers, especially during strong sanction periods. Despite Western concerns, Iran and China have maintained engagement in importing and exporting, demonstrating the value of diplomatic ties. Joining forums like the SCO is Iran's strategic decision to improve

relations with member states, countering U.S. pressures, and gaining regional support for economic revitalization. The SCO, with its expanding influence and diverse membership, provides Iran with a platform to strengthen ties with China, Russia, and other member states.

> "Acceptance of Iran as a full member of SCO will open up a new horizon of multilateralism. It will be beneficial not only for Iran but for the whole region. Many analysts argued that even if Iran may not be able to reap many immediate benefits from joining the SCO, it indicates Iran's willingness to pursue stronger relations with China and Russia, the organization's two most powerful members. The news of Iran's SCO membership was highlighted by Iranian media as proof that Iran and China "are growing exceedingly close," with the assertion that possible pressure from China and Russia was a factor in Iran's admission to the organization."

> (Aamna Khan - https://thediplomat.com)

VII. Support of Eurasian Region

Iran's engagement in converging security interests across Eurasia reflects its commitment to addressing concerns about instability in Central Asia. As part of the SCO, Iran collaborates on security issues, anti-narcotics operations, and regional security alliances, particularly in the Caspian Sea. The SCO's planned strategy aligns with Iran's endeavors to expand business and trade with Eurasian states, offering a platform to reap broader economic benefits.

> "Iran pursues meaningful participation in Eurasian economic and security institutions with the hope to decrease the pressure of Western sanctions."

> (Fardin Eftekhari - https://thediplomat.com)

VIII. SCO as an Alley to Counter US Policies for Iran

A crucial factor for Iran in joining the SCO is to counter U.S. policies and sanctions. Iran views regional support, especially from China, Russia, and India, as essential to resist U.S. pressures diplomatically. As a permanent SCO member, Iran seeks a strong shelter to revitalize its economy, gain international attention, and leverage the support of member states against U.S. sanctions.

IX. Support of China and Russia

Iran's strategic approach involves building stronger ties with China and Russia. Despite historical considerations, China's economic policy in the region, as seen in trade agreements with Iran, aligns with Iran's goals. Russia, a long-time supporter of Iran, provides an advantageous position within the SCO framework. Iran's pursuit of SCO membership is influenced by its desire to deepen alliances with China and Russia, leveraging their support in the face of external pressures.

> "Iran joined the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, another step toward ending its global isolation as it builds warmer ties with Russia and China."

> (Sudhi Ranjan Sen -Bloomberg -July 4, 2023)

6. OPPORTUNITIES FOR PAKISTAN:

Pakistan stands poised to benefit significantly from Iran's SCO membership, with opportunities ranging from enhanced regional security cooperation and increased trade prospects to collaborative infrastructure projects and energy partnerships. As both nations navigate external pressures, SCO membership provides a strategic platform for Pakistan to strengthen diplomatic ties, counterbalance external challenges, and foster cultural and educational exchanges within this influential regional organization.

I. Enhanced Regional Security Cooperation:

With Iran's membership in the SCO, there is an opportunity for Pakistan to benefit from increased regional security collaboration. The SCO's focus on addressing terrorism, extremism, and ensuring stability in the region provides a platform for joint efforts in combating shared security threats.

II. Trade and Economic Opportunities:

Iran's inclusion in the SCO expands economic prospects for Pakistan within the organization. Pakistan can leverage its geographical location and historical ties with Iran to strengthen economic cooperation, potentially tapping into the growing trade and investment opportunities facilitated by the SCO.

III. Connectivity and Infrastructure Development:

The SCO emphasizes regional connectivity, and with Iran being a key player, there is an opportunity for Pakistan to collaborate on infrastructure projects. Initiatives like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) can align with the SCO's goals, fostering greater connectivity and economic integration.

IV. Energy Cooperation:

Given Iran's significant oil and gas reserves, there is potential for increased energy cooperation within the SCO. Pakistan, with its energy needs, can explore avenues for collaboration in energy projects, contributing to energy security and addressing power shortages.

V. Diplomatic Collaboration:

Iran's diplomatic engagement within the SCO opens avenues for Pakistan to strengthen its diplomatic ties in the region. Collaborative efforts on regional and global issues can enhance Pakistan's diplomatic standing and contribute to a more cohesive approach to geopolitical challenges.

VI. Counterbalance to External Pressures:

As both Iran and Pakistan face external pressures, SCO membership provides a collective platform to counterbalance these pressures. Shared interests within the SCO can enable mutual support and solidarity, particularly in navigating challenges posed by sanctions or other external factors.

VII. Cultural and Educational Exchanges:

The SCO emphasizes cooperation in various spheres, including culture and education. Pakistan can benefit from increased cultural exchanges, fostering people-to-people connections and educational collaborations. This can contribute to a deeper understanding between SCO member states, including Iran and Pakistan.

7. FUTURE CHALLENGES

Iran's inclusion in the SCO marks a significant step in strengthening regional ties and countering economic sanctions. While it provides opportunities for trade, investment, and technology transfer, concerns about human rights issues remain. The SCO's expansion into West Asia enhances its strategic importance, yet challenges persist due to internal divisions and differing interests among member states. The organization's reaction to Western sanctions and charges against Tehran remains a factor to watch in the evolving world order.

"However, given previous experiences, one should not be overly optimistic about any dramatic transformation in the region's atmosphere. In 2017, when India and Pakistan joined the SCO, many trumpeted a new era of friendship between the two countries, but the SCO has not been able to smooth frictions between the rivals."

(Aamna Khan - https://thediplomat.com)

8. CONCLUSION:

Iran's accession to permanent membership within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) marks a pivotal juncture in the country's diplomatic and geopolitical pursuits. This strategic move, driven by economic imperatives and a desire to counterbalance external pressures, aligns with Iran's vision for regional cooperation and connectivity. As a significant player within the SCO, Iran not only enhances the organization's influence in West Asia but also positions itself to reap economic benefits, particularly amid the challenges posed by U.S. sanctions. The SCO, with its expanding reach and diverse membership, provides Iran with a platform to strengthen ties with China, Russia, and other member states, fostering a sense of regional solidarity. However, while opportunities for trade, investment, and technology transfer abound, challenges persist. Internal divisions and disparate interests among member states, coupled with the SCO's response to external pressures and human rights concerns, underscore the complex landscape that Iran must navigate in its SCO membership. The future will unveil the true extent of the impact of this geopolitical alignment, shedding light on the SCO's role in shaping the region's trajectory and the effectiveness of Iran's strategic engagement within this multilateral framework.

THE GLOBAL RETREAT OF LIBERAL DEMOCRACY: CAN DEMOCRACY SURVIVE IN 2024?

Synopsis:

THE GLOBAL RETREAT OF LIBERAL DEMOCRACY: CAN DEMOCRACY SURVIVE 2024?

1. INTRODUCTION:

The global landscape of liberal democracy is confronting an unprecedented challenge, as democratic decline becomes a pervasive phenomenon across regions. The conventional path to authoritarianism, marked by coups, has evolved into a subtler but no less insidious erosion of democratic values. Political scientists describe this phenomenon through terms such as "democratic erosion," "democratic backsliding," and "autocratization." The intricate nature of this decline is articulated by the deceptive electoral road to breakdown, where elected autocrats maintain a democratic façade while undermining its essence. The global state of democracy in 2023 witnessed a contraction in democratic quality, with declines persisting in representation and the rule of law. *The Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) report reveals a concerning trend, highlighting that 72% of the world's population resides in autocracies by 2022.* Asia-Pacific, once a beacon of progress, has regressed to 1978 levels of liberal democracy. This wave of autocratization is not confined to specific regions, encompassing countries like Afghanistan, Haiti, Myanmar, and Uzbekistan. The erosion of democratic institutions, freedom of expression, and the rise of autocracies pose existential threats, with implications for disinformation, polarization, and the very fabric of global democracy. As we stand at the crossroads of 2024, the question looms: Can democracy survive this era of unprecedented challenges?

2. WHAT IS DEMOCRATIC DECLINE?

Democratic decline refers to a gradual deterioration of democratic principles, institutions, and practices within a society. It involves a weakening of key democratic elements, such as the rule of law, protection of human rights, political pluralism, and civic participation. This decline can manifest in various ways, including erosion of institutional checks and balances, attacks on the independence of the judiciary, restrictions on media freedom, and the concentration of power in the hands of a few.

Globally, it is increasingly rare for an authoritarian to come to power via a coup. Instead, democracies in decline usually experience a slow but steady erosion. The process is often incremental and episodic. Each step is only partial. There can be intermediate moments of apparent stability or equilibrium. In the words of political scientists **Daniel Ziblatt and Steven Levitsky:**

"The electoral road to breakdown is dangerously deceptive... People still vote. Elected autocrats maintain a veneer of democracy while eviscerating its substance. Many government efforts to subvert democracy are 'legal,' in the sense that they are approved by the legislature or accepted by the courts."

(How Democracies Die by Daniel Ziblatt

Political scientists use a variety of terms to describe this phenomenon, including "democratic erosion," "democratic backsliding," "democratic regression," and "autocratization." Whatever the terminology, democratic decline has ramifications throughout society. It is associated with certain changes in public attitudes, including vilification of members of the opposing party and widespread misinformation. There tends to be a decline in non-governmental institutions critical to a healthy public sphere, such as an independent media, a vibrant education system, and an engaged civil society. All these symptoms of decline in most part of the globe.

3. DEMOCRACY IN RETREAT ACROSS THE GLOBE:

The global state of democracy in 2023 has been complex, fluid and unequal. Across every region of the world, democracy has continued to contract, with declines in at least one indicator of democratic performance. For the past six consecutive years, more countries have been experiencing declines in their democratic quality than have been improving, with 2021 the worst year on record. These broad declines at the aggregate level have been seen in Representation (Credible Elections and Effective Parliament) and Rule of Law (Judicial Independence, and Personal Integrity and Security) in every region of the world.

The level of democracy for the average global citizen by 2022 is back to 1986. According to the **DEMOCRACY REPORT 2023 by Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem):**

➤ Democracy has deteriorated in many regions. Asia-Pacific is now down to levels of 1978.

➤ There are more closed autocracies than liberal democracies – for the first time in more than two decades.

➤ 72% of the world's population – 5.7 billion people – live in autocracies by 2022.2

➤ Freedom of expression is deteriorating in 35 countries in 2022 - ten years ago it was only 7 countries.

➤ Government censorship of the media is worsening in 47 countries over last ten years.

➤ Government repression of civil society organizations is worsening in 37 countries.

L Increasing Autocratization In All Regions:

The current wave of autocratization spans all regions of the world. Democratic declines in the population-weighted measures are particularly evident in the Asia Pacific region and Eastern Europe and Central Asia. The trend is also noticeable in Latin America and the Caribbean, even though it remains one of the most democratic regions.

In the Asia-Pacific region, the degree of liberal democracy enjoyed by the average citizen is now down to levels last seen in 1978 – 45 years ago. It was the year

when Deng Xiaoping initiated the liberalization of the Chinese economy, and one year after Indira Gandhi's state of emergency was lifted in India, restoring the country's democracy. The average level is affected by declines in populous countries such as India.

More Closed Autocracies than Liberal Democracies

- The world has more closed autocracies than liberal democracies – for the first time in more than two decades.

- 72% of the world's population – 5.7 billion people – now live in autocracies – an increase from 46% ten years ago.

- 28 % of the population – 2.2 billion people – live in closed autocracies.

- 13 % of the population – 1 billion people – live in liberal democracies.

Source: DEMOCRACY REPORT 2023 by Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem)

Nine new countries have descended into closed autocracies in just the last two years: Afghanistan, Chad, Guinea, Haiti, Iran, Mali, Myanmar, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. This is another sign of how significant the present global wave of autocratization is. Both electoral democracies and electoral autocracies have increased in numbers during the last 50 years. Over the last decade, they have been taking turns as the most common type of regime.

Overall, electoral autocracies are increasing markedly, from 35 in 1978 to 56 in 2022, making them the second most common type of regime. The decline in numbers of closed autocracies until 2010 explains much of this upward trend. Many closed autocracies liberalized and started to hold multiparty elections in the 1980s and 1990s. Some became electoral democracies, but many stalled as electoral autocracies, for example, Algeria and Pakistan. The recent surge in autocratization is turning countries back into closed autocracies, for example, Mali and Thailand.

Drastic Changes in Ten Years

➢ Freedom of Expression is deteriorating in 35 countries in 2022 – ten years ago it was only 7.
➢ Rule of law and the quality of elections are also facing declines in many countries.
➢ Government censorship of the media is worsening in 47 countries.

> ➢ Government repression of civil society organizations is worsening in 37 countries.
> ➢ Quality of elections is worsening in 30 countries.

Governments in 40 countries are increasing their control over civil society organizations' (CSOs) existence ('entry and exit'), and in 37 countries repression of CSOs is ramping up. Ten years ago, all aspects of liberal democracy were *improving* in more countries than they were declining in. By 2022, the situation is completely overturned.

What is notable as the wave of autocratization progresses is that not only democratic countries such as Brazil, Ghana, Greece, Poland, and the United States of America are engulfed in autocratization. Autocratization often goes beyond democratic weakening and breakdown to deepen even further after countries like El Salvador, Hungary, or India turn into electoral autocracies. Other autocracies that are autocratizing further include Burkina Faso, Philippines, and Russia.

II. Disinformation, Polarization, and Democracy:

a. The use of AI by autocratic governments:

Disinformation, fueled by false narratives, conspiracy theories, and state-sponsored campaigns, poses a significant threat, amplified by the downsizing of social media safeguards. Autocratic regimes, particularly Russia and China, exploit political discontent, aiming to undermine democratic governance. The convergence of AI advancements further complicates the situation, with the potential for AI tools to both inform and mislead voters, raising concerns about the integrity of the electoral process.

b. State-Sponsored Disinformation: The Menace of Russia, China, and Iran in Global Elections

State-sponsored disinformation campaigns, notably from autocratic governments like Russia, China, and Iran, represent a major challenge to global democracy. These campaigns seek to discredit democratic models and exploit social divisions, with the upcoming U.S. presidential election a prime target. Using AI tools, such as the "Doppelgänger" effort, these campaigns create fake accounts and news outlets, easily transcending borders and spreading disinformation. Conspiracy theories targeting Western political influence are disseminated globally, affecting public opinion in diverse regions. The prevalence of election fraud narratives and their evolution remain key concerns, threatening the democratic process in various countries.

"Concerns about the impact of generative AI on elections have become urgent as we enter a year in which billions of people across the planet will vote. During 2024, it is projected that there will be elections in Taiwan, India, Russia, South Africa, Mexico, Iran, Pakistan, Indonesia, the European Union, the US and the UK. Many of these elections will not determine just the future of nation states; they will also shape how we tackle

global challenges such as geopolitical tensions and the climate crisis. It is likely that each of these elections will be influenced by new generative AI technologies in the same way the elections of the 2010s were shaped by social media."

(André Spicer – The Guardian - 3 Jan 2024)

c. Polarization, Extremism, and AI: Shaping the Political Battlefield of 2024

The political environment in 2024 is marked by escalating polarization and extremism, fueled by hate speech and misinformation. Social media algorithms contribute to echo chambers, amplifying extreme voices while marginalizing moderates. Alternative platforms like Telegram and BitChute facilitate the spread of conspiracy theories, influencing electoral policies and legislation. A risk-reward proposition emerges with AI, presenting opportunities for informed democratic governance but also the potential for widespread disinformation. Concerns arise about the use of AI-generated content to mislead voters, manipulate election-related information, and erode trust in the democratic process.

d. Tech Giants Retreat: The Erosion of Safeguards in the Face of Global Election Challenges

As the world faces this intricate web of challenges, major tech companies are scaling back protections against disinformation. Meta, YouTube, and other platforms have reshaped or downsized teams responsible for content moderation, and efforts to combat toxic content have waned. Emerging platforms like TikTok and Substack are poised to play larger roles in political content. The industry's reliance on AI-powered content moderation tools raises doubts about the effectiveness of safeguarding democracy. With billions turning to these platforms for information, the potential impact on the integrity of elections is a significant concern, highlighting the need for proactive strategies in ensuring election integrity.

III. Shifting Global Balance of Economic Power

The global balance of economic power is shifting. Autocracies are becoming more powerful economically, and their numbers are growing. Conversely, democracies are gradually declining in their share of global economic wealth. If these trends continue, autocracies will surpass democracies in economic power over the next decades.

IV. The limits of free elections across the globe:

So is democracy in crisis? Or is it that it and its institutions and spirit have always needed time to develop, and tending?

Its difficulties will play out this year in four distinct electoral cultures. The first is a tyrannical group that includes Belarus, Russia and Rwanda, where rulers jail opponents and run a charade of an election culminating in 90-per cent m......

group comprises performative democracies such as Iran, Tunisia and Bangladesh, where leaders may just about allow the opposition to compete — but not to win.

It is in the third and fourth tiers, however, that most is at stake. In the third, encompassing the most voters this year, democracy faces a more subtle erosion. The scenario here is for leaders to win power in genuinely free and fair elections but then oversee illiberal policies, as has happened in Hungary under Viktor Orbán. In India, Indonesia and Mexico millions will vote enthusiastically this year, but the spirit of their democracies and some institutions that uphold it are under strain.

In the fourth tier there are the older democracies, where the centrist establishment is threatened by further gains of populists at the ballot box. Anti-Islam extremist Geert Wilders won elections in the Netherlands in November and the far right is expected to enjoy a surge in support in much of the EU in European parliament elections in June.

4. DEMOCRATIC BACKSLIDE IN DIFFERENT CORNERS OF THE WORLD:

In Latin America, Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador is intent on weakening key democratic guardrails, such as the country's National Electoral Institute, while in El Salvador, President Nayib Bukele is well along such a path. Peru is beset by perpetual political conflict and instability, and Guatemala's political and security elite are steadily undercutting the country's weak democratic institutions. In South Asia, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's relentless pursuit of an illiberal Hindu majoritarian agenda threatens his country's democracy, while democratic politics in many other countries in the region, such as Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, have either corroded significantly or are in a state of disruptive churn. In the Middle East, Israel's long-standing democracy has come under unprecedented internal pressure from a government bent on, undercutting the independent judiciary, while Tunisia's once-promising democratic transition has been derailed by a president determined to wield absolute power. In Africa, military coups or other unconstitutional power transitions have multiplied in the past two years, hitting Burkina Faso, Chad, Guinea, Mali, and Sudan. The recent reelection of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Türkiye is a sobering reminder of just how difficult it is to best an entrenched strongman leader, even when the leader's recent economic record is manifestly terrible.

I. Understanding democratic decline in the United States:

Experts agree that the health of U.S. democracy has declined in recent years—but what does that mean? The United States is experiencing two major forms of democratic erosion in its governing institutions: *election manipulation* and *executive overreach*.

Most obviously, after the 2020 election, the sitting president, despite admitting privately that he had lost, attempted to subvert the results and remain in office. But democratic erosion in the United States is not synonymous with Donald Trump. Since

2010, state legislatures have instituted laws intended to reduce voters' access to the ballot, politicize election administration, and foreclose electoral competition via extreme gerrymandering. The United States has also seen substantial expansions of executive power and serious efforts to erode the independence of the civil service. Against these pressures, the gridlocked and hyperpartisan Congress is poorly equipped to provide unbiased oversight and accountability of the executive, and there are serious questions about the impartiality of the judiciary.

a. Strategic manipulation of elections.

Distinct from "voter fraud," which is almost non-existent in the United States, election manipulation has become increasingly common and increasingly extreme. Examples include election procedures that make it harder to vote (like inadequate polling facilities) or that reduce the opposing party's representation (like gerrymandering).

b. Executive aggrandizement:

Even a legitimately elected leader can undermine democracy if they eliminate governmental "checks and balances" or consolidate power in unaccountable institutions. The United States has seen substantial expansions of executive power and serious efforts to erode the independence of the civil service. In addition, there are serious questions about the impartiality of the judiciary.

Since 2020, there have been promising signs for American democracy. For one, those who participated in the 2020 election subversion effort have faced investigation and, in some cases, prosecutions; these processes bode well for the continuance of the rule of law. In addition, the 2022 elections occurred without major incident. However, we have not seen a change in the fundamental political dynamics that led to the erosion of U.S. democracy. As long as a major political party remains uncommitted to accepting legitimate electoral defeat, democracy cannot be reasonably described as secure.

c. The role of courts in undermining Democracy in the U.S:

The U.S. Supreme Court has witnessed a significant growth in power over time, raising concerns about its impartiality and commitment to democratic processes. Despite defeats to the Trump administration on executive aggrandizement and administrative law, questions arise about the Court's conservative shift, perceived political motivations, and its impact on voting rights protections. The Court's interventions in elections and expanded role in adjudicating disputes, notably seen in cases like Bush v. Gore and Moore v. Harper, highlight challenges to democratic norms and underscore the need for scrutiny.

"Today, most Americans —including most Democrats and most Republicans—believe the Court is motivated primarily by politics, rather than by the law."

(Poll - https://www.businessinsider.com)

II. Elections and democracy in South Africa:

When South Africa goes to the polls in the middle of this year, it will be 30 years since Nelson Mandela and the African National Congress ended white rule by winning a commanding majority in the country's first all-race elections. The media, civil society and courts have kept the democratic flame alive — and the ANC on its toes. This year the party faces its first competitive race.

But South Africa is one of a number of important countries in the third tier of electoral contests where independent institutions are under pressure and where this year's elections implicitly pose two big questions. Are free elections, for all that they are worth celebrating, an insufficient guide to a democracy's health? And is what happens next its real test?

III. The Fate of India's democracy under Modi:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata party are expected to win a third successive victory in May, capitalising on a booming economy and his sky-high ratings. But this comes against a backdrop of intolerance towards minorities, pressure on the independent media, often applied behind-the-scenes via tax policy and the undermining of the courts.

Among the two concerns for the future, the first is over an undercurrent of pressure on the media and on the courts. The arbitrariness around civil liberties has increased and is signified in the loss of independence of the Supreme Court and the judiciary.

The other is over pluralism, in particular tolerance towards minorities. There is a cultural movement around asserting Hindu cultural supremacy, and that kind of nationalist politics risks converting India into an ethno-nationalist majoritarian state.

IV. Leftwing populism in Mexico:

There is a similarly blurred picture in Mexico. The elections in June will mark a democratic milestone as the two main presidential candidates are women, ensuring the country's first female leader. But the outgoing president, the leftwing populist Andrés Manuel López Obrador, has been chipping away at the independence of democratic institutions and is now pushing for a constitutional amendment to allow the 11 Supreme Court judges to be elected by universal suffrage. His critics worry that his protégée, the ruling Morena party's candidate, Claudia Sheinbaum, the frontrunner, would continue in this vein if elected.

"Our democracy is still incipient," says Jorge Castañeda, a former foreign minister in Mexico, who now lectures on governance at NYU and Sciences Po. "It's a work in progress. Our first proper election was in 2000 [which ended the then ruling party's 71-year hold on power]. "López Obrador has a weak target when he tries to destroy the independence of judicial and independent agencies built up over the last 30 years. They don't have the resources, esprit de corps or a history to look back on."

A further factor is that at a time when America is competing with China for the world's support, and immigration is a major American election issue, Washington is less vocal about democratic slippage than in the 1990s and 2000s when it was the sole superpower. America has been noticeably silent about López Obrador's pressure on the courts.

V. Deteriorating Democracy: Hungary's Decline Under Viktor Orban's Leadership

Democracy in Hungary, led by Prime Minister Viktor Orban, has further deteriorated, according to a report by the US government-funded Freedom House. The report highlights Hungary's declining score, dropping from 45% to 43% democratic in the past year, with particular criticism directed at irregularities in the parliamentary elections and the Orban regime's growing intolerance for dissenting voices. Orban's leadership, marked by curtailed checks and balances in the media and judiciary, has faced criticism from the European Union. Hungary's alignment with the global far-right was underscored by hosting the European version of the Conservative Political Action Conference, where Orban criticized LGBTQ+ rights and migration.

VI. Tunisia's Broken Democracy

Tunisia, once a symbol of hope for democratic progress after the Arab Spring, is now witnessing a disturbing backslide into autocracy under President Kais Saied, marked by President's self-coup on July 25, 2021.. This regression is not only eroding basic democratic values but is also adversely impacting the economy, basic human rights, and the lives of many citizens. Saied's rule has seen a crackdown on opposition figures, journalists, and those critical of the government, resulting in a climate of repression and diminishing freedoms.

VII. Democratic regression in Pakistan:

The upcoming general elections in Pakistan, scheduled for February 8, are overshadowed by controversies surrounding the delimitation process and the Election Commission's handling of formal complaints. Concerns have been raised about breaches in the population allocation mechanism, with some constituencies deviating significantly from the allowed 10 percent variation. Political parties, including the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), have accused each other of manipulating constituency boundaries to gain electoral advantages, reflecting broader challenges to the democratic process in Pakistan. The military establishment's influence, delays in conducting elections based on the latest population census, and allegations of biased practices raise questions about the fairness and transparency of the democratic process in the country.

The delimitation disputes, which the Election Commission plans to address after the elections, contribute to a broader narrative of democratic regression in Pakistan. The manipulation of electoral symbols, such as stripping the Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf (PTI) of

power dynamics involving major political parties, military influence, and legal controversies surrounding candidates further underscore the challenges facing democratic consolidation in Pakistan.

VIII. Bangladesh's Sham Election and the Regression of Democracy in South and Southeast Asia

The recent election in Bangladesh, which resulted in a reported victory (taking a reported 222 seats out of a total of 298 available) for the long-ruling Awami League and Sheikh Hasina, marks a concerning development in the country's democratic trajectory. The election, labeled a "sham" by critics, saw the opposition party, BNP, boycotting it, citing concerns about fairness. Sheikh Hasina's increasing autocratic rule has been characterized by a crackdown on opposition parties, civil society, and the press. The absence of a caretaker government during the election, arrests of political opposition members, and reports of irregularities led leading democracies like the United States and the United Kingdom to condemn the process as neither free nor fair. This reflects a broader trend of democratic regression in South and Southeast Asia, where various countries are witnessing challenges to democratic principles and institutions.

"Sheikh Hasina's actions are consistent with an ongoing, longstanding trend of democratic regression in South and Southeast Asia. This trend encompasses military takeovers and non-military autocracies or hybrid states that have quashed democracy, or at least a degree of freedom, in countries like Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, and Myanmar."

(Joshua Kurlantzick - Council on Foreign Relations - January 10, 2024)

5. MILITARY COUPS AS A THREAT TO DEMOCRACY:

Burkina Faso faced a significant decline in freedom, shifting from Partly Free to Not Free status due to two successive coups led by Lieutenant Colonel Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba and later Captain Ibrahim Traoré. Both leaders ruled by decree, suspended the constitution, and made vague commitments to future democratic elections.

In December 2022, **Peru's President Pedro Castillo** attempted a self-coup to avoid impeachment, leading to his removal, large protests, and a state of emergency. The crisis resulted in Peru's downgrade from Free to Partly Free status, threatening its political stability amid previous presidential resignations and impeachments.

The long-term impact of coups on human rights is evident in Thailand, where a 2014 coup led by **Prayuth Chan-ocha** continues to stifle civil society, with critics facing charges under lèse-majesté laws. Guinea's ruling junta, established in a 2021 coup, rolled back rights, banning political protests. Similarly, Myanmar's 2021 coup brought relentless violence, displacements, and the destruction of elected civilian rule.

The **2016 failed coup in Turkey** has had lasting effects, as President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan used it to remove democratic checks and balances. In 2022, ahead of a crucial presidential election, Turkey further restricted political rights by controlling the selection of judges and implementing a "disinformation" law to suppress opposition campaigns and independent media.

6. THE RISE OF RIGHT-WING EXTREMISM AND THE RETREAT OF DEMOCRACY

What actually challenges one's intellectual curiosity, is not only the rise in right-wing extremism and authoritarianism, but the support that right-wing populist leaders are receiving from the working class populations that traditionally voted left. Examples and cases abound. In the United States Trump is now the favourite to win the Republican nomination for the 2024 presidential election. In France, Marine Le Pen may have lost the last presidential election, but she won 43% of the vote. Similarly in Brazil, the right-wing candidate, Jair Bolsonaro, may have lost the last election but received 49% of the vote. Giorgia Meloni, Italy's prime minister, heads a coalition of right-wing parties, and her own party, Brothers of Italy, has fascist roots. Victor Orban in Hungary won a fourth term as prime minister in 2022, by a landslide. In Poland, the far right PiS government is likely to win next month's election. The Sweden Democrats, who support the ruling coalition, are a nationalist, conservative, anti-immigration, anti-Islamic and Eurosceptic far-right party. In the developing world, examples of right-wing authoritarian regimes are Erdogan's in Turkey and Narendra Modi's in India. This list is not exhaustive, but it is indicative of the general direction of national politics in rich and poor countries.

7. WHY IS DEMOCRACY IN RETREAT?

While there is no singular cause of the democratic erosion taking place around the world, there are thought to be a number of common challenges. Among the most talked about is the rise of heightened political polarization, fueled in part by the rise in populist-style "us versus them" politics. This stark polarization has resulted in gridlocked politics, heightened distrust in democratic institutions, and even political violence. Other notable causes include increasing distrust in the legitimacy of elections and widespread disillusionment in mainstream political parties.

But another, perhaps more fundamental cause is rising levels of inequality. Democracy ultimately is a 'system predicated on a notion of equality between citizens," says Casas-Zamora, the former Costa Rican politician who now serves as secretary general of International IDEA, "The grotesque levels of inequality that we are seeing, and that the pandemic made worse, go against the ethos of democracy."

8. RECOMMENDATIONS TO STRENGTHEN DEMOCRACY ACROSS THE GLOBE:

Apart from reducing inequality, one of the most important things that countries can do to stave off democratic backsliding is to ensure that its checks on executive power—including institutions such as the judiciary, the free press, and civil society—are safeguarded. For democracies, this also means ensuring that the credibility of its elections, the most important check on power in any democracy, is preserved. All stakeholders who have an interest in reinforcing the legitimacy of the democratic model of governance have a role to play in creating, maintaining and supporting such collaboration, as well as being innovative in shaping such cooperation. Following recommendations merit consideration in this regard:

I. **In order to safeguard the bedrock institutions of representative government:**

  i. To counter declines in Credible Elections, governments and electoral management bodies must frame their work *in the service of* citizens. Elections are not a privilege; they are a right in democratic systems. As such, all stakeholders—and especially electoral management bodies, the media and the courts—must ensure that electoral activities are based on facilitating equal access to all phases of the electoral process. At a minimum, this includes equality of contestation and equality of participation, as well as certainty about the 'rules of the game'.

  ii. Parliaments should focus on increasing public participation opportunities and transparency of legislative action. Parliamentary bodies should prioritize facilitating easy and inclusive public access to records and parliamentary questioning, as well as the proceedings of relevant committees. They should also disseminate and promote public access to any reporting on government performance.

  iii. Cross-regional and cross-sectoral partnerships—both between different parliaments and between parliaments and other CIs—can share a wealth of valuable lessons with participants. Donors and democracy support organizations should prioritize support for the creation and maintenance of such partnership networks, which may be useful for more effective parliaments.

II. **In order to protect the rule of law, judiciaries and regulatory bodies that are finding themselves increasingly in the limelight for their work on checking power:**

  i. Governments should consult with judiciaries and judicial services bodies to co-create mechanisms that allow for the reporting, investigation and punishment of actions that harm judicial integrity, with a focus on cases or individuals that have an impact on power groups or that are relevant to politically sensitive issues. When judges are the subjects of punitive measures, these measures must be

transparent, impartial and oriented around the protection of the rights of those affected (OHCHR 2022b).

ii. Governments must ensure that prosecutors and their offices are independent and that their independence is protected by laws that are in line with the Guidelines on the Role of Prosecutors (UN 1990; OHCHR 2022b).

iii. Governments must protect and proactively enhance the independence of formal and informal regulatory and watchdog bodies by facilitating regular monitoring of these organizations' ability to meaningfully fulfil their duties. Transparency International's regular assessments of anti-corruption agencies and the Westminster Foundation for Democracy's assessment framework for independent oversight institutions and regulatory agencies are strong examples of such assessment and monitoring mechanisms (Transparency International n.d.; De Vrieze 2019).

III. To counter continuing, serious deterioration in freedoms of expression, association and assembly and to defend the work of media and civil society: –

i. Governments must recommit to protecting the freedoms of expression, association and assembly, by updating their laws and ensuring that they are in line with international human rights standards. Key here is digital literacy and its role in combating violence, ensuring equitable knowledge societies and promoting self-protection. The 53rd session of the United Nations Human Rights Council includes a session on the freedom of opinion and expression, and it is devoted specifically to digital, media and information literacy (UN General Assembly 2022b, 2023b).

ii. Civil society organizations should continue to lead in conducting assessments of states' protection of these rights. Their efforts should include rigorous data collection that allows the world to clearly see progress or regression in state performance (UN General Assembly 2023a).

iii. Governments must ensure that there is a strong, independent and impartial mechanism that can receive and act on reports of violations of the rights of journalists and members of civil society organizations. This resource should be part of a network of mechanisms and norms within governments that integrate protection of civil society and the media into laws and training. Mexico's Protection Mechanism for Human Rights Defenders and Journalists, which includes bodyguards, armoured cars, panic buttons and other assistance to journalists, provides the framework for such a mechanism. In recent years, however, the Mexican mechanism has suffered from serious ~~h~~ ~~~~ ~~~~ **that**

THE BEST BOOKS FOR UNDERSTANDING
THE DYNAMICS OF DECLINING DEMOCRACY

1. How Democracies Die by Daniel Ziblatt and Steven Levitsky

Donald Trump's presidency has raised a question that many of us never thought we'd be asking: Is our democracy in danger? Harvard professors Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt have spent more than twenty years studying the breakdown of democracies in Europe and Latin America, and they believe the answer is yes. Democracy no longer ends with a bang—in a revolution or military coup—but with a whimper: the slow, steady weakening of critical institutions, such as the judiciary and the press, and the gradual erosion of long-standing political norms. The good news is that there are several exit ramps on the road to authoritarianism. The bad news is that, by electing Trump, we have already passed the first one.

Drawing on decades of research and a wide range of historical and global examples, from 1930s Europe to contemporary Hungary, Turkey, and Venezuela, to the American South during Jim Crow, Levitsky and Ziblatt show how democracies die—and how ours can be saved.

2. Democracy under Pressure: Resilience or Retreat? By Ursula van Beek

This book identifies the main factors shaping the fortunes of democracy globally. Why do some democracies in the same region and presumably subject to similar global influences remain stable while others regress? This is the question guiding all the authors of this edited book. In the search for answers, they examine 16 democracies in paired and tripled comparisons in sub-Saharan Africa, North and Latin America, East Asia, Western and Central Europe, along with two polar cases. Insights from the perspectives of history, political science, economics and international relations are offered along with a sketch of possible future scenarios. Combining approaches anchored in the analytical tradition with empirical case studies and given the broad range of topics, this book is bound to be of interest not only to students and practitioners of democracy but also to the broader academic and general readership.

3. Between Theory and Practice: Essays on Criticism and Crises of Democracy by Eerik Lagerspetz and Oili Pulkkinen

This book explores how the concept of democracy is being impacted by technological developments. Is it possible, in the complex modern world, to have a government 'by the people'? Does, for example, digital technology help us to bring the reality closer to the ideal? Or does it actually make the ideal unattainable? The volume brings together conceptual historians, philosophers, political theorists and sociologists to discuss the criticisms and crises of democracy with fresh approaches to the idea of

democracy, democratic theory, democratic institutions, trust and distrust, populism, and advancement of technologies in Western societies.

4. Democracy in Retreat by Joshua Kurlantzick

In *Democracy in Retreat: The Revolt of the Middle Class and the Worldwide Decline of Representative Government*, Joshua Kurlantzick identifies forces that threaten democracy and shows that conventional wisdom has blinded world leaders to a real crisis. "Today a constellation of factors, from the rise of China to the lack of economic growth in new democracies to the West's financial crisis, has come together to hinder democracy throughout the developing world," he writes. "Absent radical and unlikely changes in the international system, that combination of antidemocratic factors will have serious staying power."

Kurlantzick pays particular attention to the revolt of middle-class citizens, traditionally proponents of reform, who have turned against democracy in countries such as Venezuela, Pakistan, and Taiwan. He observes that countries once held up as model new democracies, such as Hungary and the Czech Republic, have since curtailed social, economic, and political freedoms. Military coups have grabbed power from Honduras to Thailand to Fiji. The number of representative governments has fallen, and the quality of democracy has deteriorated in many states where it had been making progress, including Russia, Kenya, Argentina, and Nigeria.